*MASTER*
*NEGATIVE*
*NO. 91-80080-1*

MICROFILMED 1991

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES/NEW YORK

as part of the
"Foundations of Western Civilization Preservation Project"

Funded by the
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Reproductions may not be made without permission from
Columbia University Library

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

The copyright law of the United States -- Title 17, United States Code -- concerns the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material...

Columbia University Library reserves the right to refuse to accept a copy order if, in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of the copyright law.

*AUTHOR:*

LEHMANN, EDVARD
1862-1930

*TITLE:*

MYSTICISM IN
HEATHENDOM ...

*PLACE:*

LONDON

*DATE:*

1910

Master Negative #

91-80080-1

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET**

Original Material as Filmed - Existing Bibliographic Record

149.3
L52

Lehmann, Edvard ~~i. e. Johannes Edvard~~, 1862–1930.

Mysticism in heathendom and Christendom, by Dr. E. Lehmann ... tr. by G. M. G. Hunt. London, Luzac & co., 1910.

3 p. l., 293, (1) p. 19$^{cm}$.

1. Hunt, G. M. G., tr.

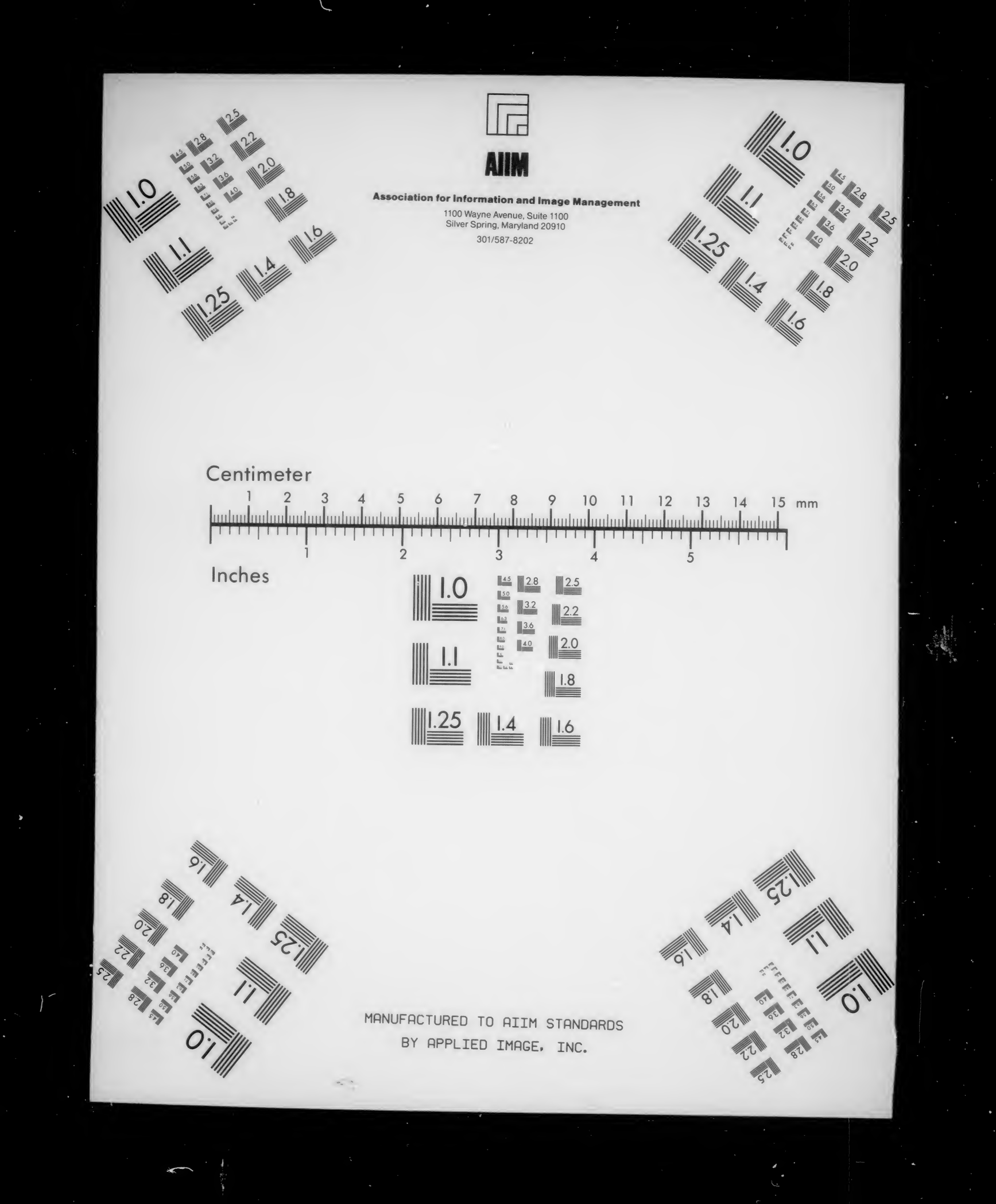
10-30412

Library of Congress

Restrictions on Use:

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mm REDUCTION RATIO: 11x
IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB
DATE FILMED: 6/12/91 INITIALS ER
FILMED BY: RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS, INC WOODBRIDGE, CT


AIIM
Association for Information and Image Management
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301/587-8202
Centimeter
Inches
MANUFACTURED TO AIIM STANDARDS
BY APPLIED IMAGE, INC.

THE LIBRARIES

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

GENERAL LIBRARY

# MYSTICISM

## IN HEATHENDOM AND CHRISTENDOM

# MYSTICISM

IN

## HEATHENDOM AND CHRISTENDOM

BY

DR. E. LEHMANN

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN

TRANSLATED BY

G. M. G. HUNT

LONDON:

LUZAC & CO.

46 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.

1910

27-17265
Replace

149.3
L52

# CONTENTS

| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| I. | PRIMITIVE MYSTICISM | 14 |
| II. | CHINESE MYSTICISM | 28 |
| III. | INDIAN MYSTICISM | 40 |
| IV. | PERSIAN MYSTICISM | 56 |
| V. | GREEK MYSTICISM | 75 |
| VI. | NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY AND MYSTICISM | 98 |
| VII. | THE MYSTICISM OF THE GREEK CHURCH | 116 |
| VIII. | THE MYSTICISM OF THE ROMAN CHURCH | 135 |
| IX. | GERMAN MYSTICISM | 172 |
| X. | LUTHER'S MYSTICISM | 205 |
| XI. | QUIETISTIC MYSTICISM | 220 |
| XII. | OUTCROPS AND AFTER-EFFECTS | 254 |

# MYSTICISM

## IN HEATHENDOM AND CHRISTENDOM

## INTRODUCTION

If all that is mystical were mysticism, who then could write a book about it? If all that is hidden and mysterious, all that is obscure in human life, were to be included in the programme —the paper-mills would be kept busy, and many eyes grow dim before the book was read to the end. For how little of the things belonging to this life is really clear to us, how much is enveloped in vague uncertainty and doubtful twilight. What we are, and what will be the end of this world, whence we come and whither we go—all these questions form part of that greatest, deepest mystery known only to Him " which seeth in secret."

If all that is mystical were mysticism, who then could determine what we are to understand by mysticism? That indefinable something always and everywhere meets us, reminding us of the existence of that which is beyond all human com-

# MYSTICISM

## IN HEATHENDOM AND CHRISTENDOM

### INTRODUCTION

If all that is mystical were mysticism, who then could write a book about it? If all that is hidden and mysterious, all that is obscure in human life, were to be included in the programme—the paper-mills would be kept busy, and many eyes grow dim before the book was read to the end. For how little of the things belonging to this life is really clear to us, how much is enveloped in vague uncertainty and doubtful twilight. What we are, and what will be the end of this world, whence we come and whither we go—all these questions form part of that greatest, deepest mystery known only to Him "which seeth in secret."

If all that is mystical were mysticism, who then could determine what we are to understand by mysticism? That indefinable something always and everywhere meets us, reminding us of the existence of that which is beyond all human com-

prehension; it is not a definite thing, not a fact about which one can argue, nor is it an historical phenomenon which can be traced step by step throughout the course of ages.

Yet—we will venture to speak about mysticism, and endeavour to find out what it comprehends. We will attempt to show what has been its influence for good and for evil in the world. Long, and possibly weary, the journey may be which we propose to undertake. We shall have to disentangle the twisted threads of mysticism as we trace them back into remote antiquity. Distant lands and vanished ages we shall visit—but also we shall discover how close mysticism is to us all, how it may be seen among us to-day or to-morrow, and appear like a new thing.

Patience must be our armour if we would understand what mysticism says to us, for it is shy and slow of speech, and expresses itself with difficulty. And when it speaks to us we cannot always be sure that we understand the meaning, or rightly apprehend the train of thought it follows. Down into the depths and up into the heights we shall be led. New-fashioned apparatus which might spare us the trembling and the awe, mysticism knows not, nor cares to know, for its doctrine—like Goethe's—is that "trembling and awe are man's best portion."

We must also prepare ourselves to be very



indulgent and long-suffering if we would enter the society of mystics. Eccentric though they be, we must bear with their follies and their pride, their madness and their misery. Are they not men like we are? Perhaps better men than we are? Better in that they strive after the best. How often has not the best dwelt among them, and in them borne glorious fruit? When the world of thought was in progress of formation, often enough the deepest philosophic truths have come forth out of mysticism, and no matter to what height philosophy has risen, mysticism has always kept closely to its side. Where heart conquered mind, it was mysticism which led the way with singing and dancing, weeping and dreaming; happy as a child or in an agony of despair—birth-pains of a new life about to appear.

In mysticism antiquity has perished; out of mysticism new times have been born. It has destroyed faith and brought forth a new belief; it has bred tension, and a maimed thing is produced; it has kindled and scorched, refreshed and poisoned. It is like wine which invigorates, but also excites and degrades. Somewhat after this fashion has been the course of mysticism, and we will now trace it from the time of ancient heathendom up to the present day—or—who will dare to say that we have done with mysticism because we are more enlightened?

What, then, is mysticism; or rather, what is a mystic? for it is easier to describe a person than to define a thing. What constitutes a mystic? What does he do? What has he to say to us?

As regards the latter, not much.

For the true mystic is silent. Quietness is his delight, and silence is his treasure. The Pythagorean philosopher who tested his disciples in the art of silence before admitting them into his circle, wisely considered it more difficult to know how to be silent than to know how to speak. To the monk-mystic, silence is a sacred duty; it is his pride and his power; it raises him above the babbling crowd, and the vow of silence has kept many lips closed even in the last hour.

Doubtless he is very practical, then, this silent man—a self-possessed person who does not talk because he has better things to do? No doubt an energetic and thorough man of business, with purse and feelings well under control? Alas! no. Worldly ways and means do not interest our mystic; *these* do not induce him to silence. Little he carries about with him, and little he cares about practical things and deeds.

For what is the good of them? The only thing worth having is far above all human power, and all the doings of the children of this world are far beneath his exalted ambition. No, let the hands lie idle in the lap, for the work of our hands availeth nothing.



Then is it by thinking that man is to work out his salvation, and is it depth of thought which makes our mystic dumb, like the man who was so engrossed in his circles and figures that he forgot to save his life? Yes, indeed, it is *thought* which ties the mystic's tongue;—only his thoughts are not like the thoughts the world thinks. He does not trouble about what one should do or not do, what ought to be and what not. He desires not, like most people, to understand worldly things in order to use them; nor to understand human nature that he may serve it. Worldly wisdom has a practical purpose, or, if it be theoretical, its object is still by a gradual process to apprehend and recognise real facts.

At this suggestion, therefore, our silent friend also shakes his head. One thing only occupies him, one thought, one desire fills his whole being,—to fathom what is beyond this world, to understand what is incomprehensible, the highest, that thought cannot reach, the deepest, that is below all things. He wants to understand God, life, the spirit above him and the spirit within him. Or rather: no, he does not want to understand, for understanding is a gradual, logical process, one thought leading up to another until the problem is solved; but how could human understanding reach those highest, sublimest heights? Therefore the mystic does not really want to understand. His object is to take a

direct hold of, to grasp, to embrace, to live and to breathe in those things which pass all knowledge.

And how can he do it ? Not, certainly, with his ordinary five senses. But what if there were a sixth ? What if in the deepest depth of the human soul there lay dormant a mysterious power, which could be quickened if only one went down deep enough to rouse it ?

*That* is what the mystic believes. He believes in the existence of a power for apprehending the higher things, a power which not every one possesses, but which can be acquired and stimulated by extraordinary efforts—in short, he believes in a *mystic organ*, which enables the devout or elect person to grasp what the world cannot understand ; a power of flight which exceeds that of any bird, a capacity of soul which begins where reason and reasonable grounds end.

That is why there is so much simplicity and so much pride in the mystic. With the wisdom of the world he cannot keep pace, but he knows better things. Hence also so much egotism among these pious men, for their own way they will go. Yet—with all his egotism—the mystic's one object is to get away from self, to be in such close touch with the highest, to be so filled with the thought of the Godhead that he loses himself in it ; and—he who is wholly filled with one idea, loses his identity.

The highest point, and peculiarly characteristic



of mysticism, is reached, when the mystically moved person is so entirely filled with this highest ideal that he is absorbed by it. He feels that the Godhead dwells in him, and declares himself to be God.

This *oneness of the human soul with the Divine Being* is the conceit of mysticism, it is this that makes mystical things into mysticism. It reveals itself under many various forms, from the crude " being possessed " to the purest " trance," from the curious religious ceremonies of savage peoples to the noblest systems of philosophy.

What chiefly distinguishes mysticism is that the ordinary religious person principally contemplates the things which *separate* him from God, and compares his own nothingness with God's greatness, his finiteness with God's infinity, his sinfulness with God's holiness. In realising the immeasurable distance, man remains fully and clearly conscious of his own humanity, and looks upon his God as a definite being quite apart from himself. But the mystic does not believe in a definable God. To him God is as indefinite as He is incomprehensible ; invisible and infinite, therefore all-embracing. No one can put a distinct line of demarcation between the human and the divine ; therefore the boundary can be crossed, therefore man can attain to this unison with God.

The mystic knows no personal God. Personality

has limitations, therefore away with personality, both in God and in man. With regard to God, personality implies barriers, boundaries which must be pulled down through meditation; with regard to man, it implies a burden which must be got rid of. Personalities stand opposite to one another, as *I* to *thee*. The true mystic refuses to think of himself as standing before his God as an *I* to a *thou*, but rather as an *I* to a higher *I*. Or better—he wants to be so absorbed, so made one with his God, that there exists no longer either *I* or *thou*.

After this manner thinks the mystic; but how about his character and behaviour? These vary considerably, from venerable repose to wildest enthusiasm. Amongst them there are sorcerers and monks, poets and philosophers, respectable citizens and hysterical women; but one thing they all have in common, namely, the desire to be in that condition in which the highest may be reached.

Most of them are conscious of the limitation of their actions, and concentrate all their efforts upon the development of the mystic organ, the sixth sense. Their supreme desire is therefore to pass beyond the condition of soulish equilibrium which is kept together by the five senses.

Away beyond the world of sense; away, beyond, outside of self; this is their ambition. This being outside of one's self, the Greeks call *extasis*, hence our word ecstasy.



Ecstasy is excessive joy, but not a mere personal joy. It is that condition in which one stands out of, or is detached from, sensible things, in which the earth vanishes away, in which the doors of sense are closed and only the innermost soul is awake. Or, again, it is that wild, rapturous delight in which everything around is forgotten, and only the yearning after the far-off, the unattainable, remains.

Whatever its symptoms it always indicates an unsound, feverish state of mind. Possibly it is a form of disease which reveals itself in our human nature not so much because we are so constituted that such excesses must find expression now and again, but rather even as trees need storms and shakings to bring them to further growth—so the human soul needs to be tugged and startled out of balance, and even taken out of itself sometimes, when a step forward in growth is imminent.

Ecstatic rapture is one of these tugs. And even when it partakes of frenzy, that is but the purchase money which has to be paid. Mysticism is a very important factor in the history of the development of the human soul. It is a kind of growing pain which attacks the young shoots, but which passes away when the fresh, vigorous life has gained the upper hand. Where this is not the case, where human nature cannot extricate itself from the meshes of mysticism, there it maims

and weakens and bows to the ground, as is seen at the present moment everywhere in the East, and even sometimes among us in the enlightened West.

Mysticism can become a habit, because the ecstatic conditions which produce mysticism can obtain a habitual power over the senses. And especially where ecstasy is the result of drinking—as is so often the case in the East—man not only becomes addicted to drink, but also to those vain broodings which follow in the wake of intoxication. There are other, more vigorous means, however, for bringing oneself into a state of rapture : thus in India hashish and opium—every people after its kind. We even hear of suffocating and sweating baths, of frantic dances. When the dervish has whirled round till he drops, when the Ashantee negro has performed his wild war-dance, wielding his club until he foams at the mouth with mad excitement, they have, each in their own way, gained that divine power which they sought.

But there is yet another kind of intoxication which works admirably, although the process is slower, and to which the mystic resorts preferably when he wishes to get into a rapt condition. This is *asceticism*. Asceticism consists—as we know from the penances prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church—in penitential exercises and chastisements imposed upon the penitent or upon



oneself for correction or punishment ; mortifications and hardships inflicted for the expiation of some sin, to gain the forgiveness of the Church or a heavenly reward. But this material object and direct benefit was not the original idea of penance. Let us take one of the commonest penances, *fasting*, and trace it back to its oldest form. We find that, although a chastisement to the flesh, its original object was to inflame the senses ; for the first phase of exhaustion is followed by violent agitation and light-headedness which produces visionary flights of the imagination.

We know also that the scourging and laceration of their bodies, as practised by some ascetics, produces a kind of frenzy, an ecstatic madness, as, for instance, in the Cybele priests of Asia Minor or in the flagellants of the Middle Ages.

Thus we see that at all times mystics have resorted to asceticism for producing ecstasy. Most often it is silent asceticism, which consists in resigned inactivity. The Greek Athos-monk, like the Indian Fakir, sits in his corner, fasting, dumb, deaf to the outer world, staring incessantly at his own body or at the tip of his nose, until his senses and his reason become confused, until all becomes inner vision and beatitude—until he is consumed by self-hypnotism. It has often been proved that mystic asceticism is a kind of hypnotic stupefaction, and where mysticism does not come

under the influence of culture this method completely gains the upper hand. The surest way for becoming one with the Godhead for these people is through artificial sleep.

The lower the standpoint of mysticism, the more such artifices are resorted to; and where we find mysticism among primitive peoples, it is always preferably ascetic. Mysticism, however, does not grow in perfection in the same proportion as it throws off asceticism and ecstasy, but rather in proportion as it gains in spirituality. Many a wise man goes about as a fool, and many deep thoughts can only find expression in clumsy outward customs. Little by little, however, as the internal light breaks through, these external forms are modified. The increase of intelligence and enlightenment, elevating human nature, clashes with the old, crude customs, and seeks to transform them. Thus ecstasy becomes enthusiasm, and intoxication spiritual transport. Asceticism becomes moral renunciation and noble self-control. Self-absorption changes into calm contemplation, the giddy dance into flights of intellect, and mental confusion becomes harmony and poesy. Through all this mental activity, the personality of man asserts itself, and claims its eternal right, by the very same means by which formerly it tried to ignore and nullify itself.

Now, since mysticism gives vitality to forms



which originally opposed its progress, it practically drives itself away, as the day the dawn. For this is the true mission of mysticism, that it announces the approach of dawn, and evil is the day which is not preceded by this dawn. The tragedy of mysticism—and it requires all human energy to prevent its taking place—is that it may just as easily degenerate into the dusk of evening, enveloping the soul in impenetrable twilight.

We shall observe this transformation scene as we watch the course of mysticism through the ages.

# I. PRIMITIVE MYSTICISM

THE goodman of the house, Mytchyl of Kolym, of the tribe of the Siberian Yakuts, is about to offer a sacrifice in honour of Ulgon Bai, the mightiest of the divinities, whom he wants to propitiate. A great feast it is to be, for during the last year the crops have been bad, many horses have died, and several of his people have suffered from an infectious disease. His eldest son has been at death's door, and two of his wives have remained childless. Besides, it is now a long time since he has celebrated a really good sacrificial feast. The old family priest, the Shaman Tusput, has warned him often enough, and told him that he would suffer for it in the end, but—a sacrifice is an expensive affair, and Tusput is greedy. Now, however, Mytchyl has made up his mind to do it in good form. Friends and relatives come from all sides and assemble round the "Yurte," *i.e.* the birchwood hut of their wealthy neighbour, for they know that the feasting will be plentiful, and they will get Ulgon Bai's blessing into the bargain.





On the place selected for the sacrifice, the brand-new Yurte has been raised among the birch-trees. For these Siberian tribesmen have no temple to worship in. When they want to feast the gods they must build a hut for them, in every respect like the one they themselves inhabit—a hut like the oldest formerly found in the pagan North, with a smoke-hole in the middle of the roof. This hut is consecrated to serve as temple, by the planting of a young birch tree in the centre, the white stem of which represents the road to Ulgon's heaven. Steps are cut out in the stem, nine steps in all; for there are nine heavens, vaulting one above another until Ulgon Bai's heaven is reached. Beyond that heaven there are still higher realms of light, to which the human mind cannot penetrate. High, high above, the Supreme Being, *Tengere Kaira Kan*, sits on his throne. From this Supreme Deity all the gods have proceeded, Ulgon Bai among them. One of the first created beings was *Erlik*, the primeval creature, who sinned and was cast out of heaven. He descended and created the earth, and therefore there is so much evil in the world. Yet the children of men are not left fatherless in this wicked world. The *spirit-fathers* watch over them, those seventeen exalted Kans, who rule over the various districts of the earth and protect their descendants. Besides these, there are the

*light-fathers*, who inhabit the third heaven, and who also are friendly towards men.

Only the Shaman, however, can communicate with these spirits, and, what is most important, only he who has intercourse with spirits can have access to the deities. As in the Catholic faith, the saints are the mediators between the believers and their God, so amongst these heathen the spirit-fathers bring the interests of humanity —and that only through the priest—before the higher deities. It requires more than human agencies to bring the priest outside of himself; the fathers must enter into him and fill him with superhuman strength. Therefore not every one can become a Shaman. In certain privileged families the office is hereditary, not because these families are particularly deserving, or particularly gifted, but because nature has endowed them with one thing, the power of being seized with convulsions at the right moment, a hereditary disposition towards epilepsy. Physical affections of this kind, cramps, convulsions, madness, frenzy, have at all times filled the uncultured with a holy dread; he sees in these not only—as in all diseases —devil's sport, but he believes that higher, divine powers are mixed up with it and "possess" the madman.

Natural tendency alone, however, is not sufficient to entitle one to become a priest. Many



exorcisms, incantations, and magical dances are necessary before the scion of a thus encumbered family can become a duly installed Shaman. From his infancy he has to practise his tricks and keep them up to the mark, just like any other professional dancer. When once installed he is ready for action at any time, and the power may come upon him suddenly. The first symptom is exhaustion, then he begins to tremble, yawn and groan, as if suffering violent pains, when suddenly, with fierce yells and rolling his eyes, he whirls and leaps about, until he falls foaming and quivering to the ground. His senses and his limbs are now quite numb, he can swallow knives, nails, needles, anything within reach, without receiving any harm, and afterwards throw them up again. One can prick a needle deep into his flesh and put a piece of red-hot iron in his mouth and he will not feel it. This condition shows clearly that the power of the fathers has entered into him.

A Shaman of this description, Mytchyl had bespoken for his feast. Phantastic and imposing is the appearance of the Shaman, in his long, flowing robe with iron images and charms dangling from it. But the chief article of his get-up is a large, flat drum of reindeer skin, which he carries like a shield on his arm. This Shaman drum is the symbol of the universe; it is adorned with

pictures representing the sun and the stars at the top, in the middle trees, and in the lower division men and animals. In this world in miniature the spirits are to take their places inside the drum. First the Shaman drums them together with the dull beat of his rough drumstick, after which he shuts them up inside the drum. The handle of the drum is in the shape of a human figure, bearing the disc of the drum between his extended arms and legs. This little drum-man is the spirits' "host." He welcomes them in the name of the universe, and appoints to them their places inside the drum.

This is the first act of the ceremony; the fathers, one after another, are drummed inside the drum. The Shaman is alone in the Yurte, and answers his own call with the voices of the spirits. At last he is filled with the power (or the gas) required for rising up into the heavens, but he must have a mount. For this purpose a horse is held ready waiting outside the Yurte. But the Shaman can only make use of the soul of the horse. This he fans or tickles out of him with a birch twig, and pretends to tie it with a horsehair strap to a pole in the Yurte. A terrible fate awaits the horse. Outside in the lonely forest he will be flayed alive, for he may not die either by blows or wounds. The skin has to be ripped off without being damaged or torn, and hung up in the wood as a



symbol of the sacrifice; the bones must be buried unbroken, while the flesh is afterwards greedily consumed at the sacrificial feast, whereby the drum-man also receives his share. The participators in the ceremony thereby represent the spirits who have come down to join in the feast. This flocking together of the spirits is symbolised by fluttering movements and rustling noises, to imitate the sound of flying wings. Clothes also are provided for the spirits, and an offering of juniper is made to them. When all this is done, the high Kan has to be called down, then the gods, and lastly Ulgon Bai himself with his family. The answer to each call comes with the words, *a Kam ai!* (Shaman, I come!). The drum is now growing so heavy with all the spirits that have been drummed into it, that the Shaman can scarcely hold it. At this juncture it is important that the door of the Yurte should be securely locked, so that no good spirits can escape and no evil ones enter.

Now the Shamanising, properly speaking, begins. The spirit-fathers inside the drum emit a salutary power which can be transmitted to men like an electric or galvanic spark. The donor of the sacrifice, with his household, are put under the influence of this power. They are all rubbed over the back in order that all evil may disappear, and they are then each in turn filled with the power of

the fathers, as the drum, with many wild gesticulations, is pressed against their ear or bare chest.

The children and the timid have now to leave the hut, for already the Shaman is getting beyond himself. Furiously beating the drum, he leaps on to the first notch in the birch tree; this signifies that he has entered the first heaven, and by striking with the drum on the ground he announces that the shell of this heaven has been broken through, expressing his infinite joy over this accomplishment by dancing round the birch tree and the fire. Then he mounts a saddle hanging on a rack in the hut;—and thus seated on the horse's soul he rides towards the second, or storm-heaven. Every time he conquers a new heaven he has to perform some definite act. When in the third heaven, he foretells the wind and the weather; in the moon-heaven he shoots a cuckoo; from the creator's heaven—the fifth—he brings down strength for women and children. With every conquest of a new heaven his antics become more frantic. At last—if he be a strong Shaman—he arrives unhurt in the ninth heaven, where he calls upon Ulgon himself to inquire whether the sacrifice, the horse, has been accepted. Finally, after several more hours of wild dancing and gesticulating, the Shaman collapses. Black and blue in the face, foaming at the mouth, his limbs quite rigid, he lies for some time groaning and moaning on the ground. A



deep, solemn silence reigns in the hut. Suddenly he rouses, leaps up, and now the merry part of the feast begins, for the consolation of the frightened spectators who have dutifully witnessed the whole performance to the end.

This Shamanising is mysticism. Not because the Shaman, in his ecstatic wildness, ascends from heaven to heaven, for this he does only to gain *access* to the gods, not to become *one* with them. All these heavens and gods are promiscuously brought together, they do not belong to the original conception of Shamanism, and therefore the Shaman cannot become identified with them. They represent but the usual stages in the assembly of the gods. Gnostic speculations of early Greek times, primitive creatures, fallen angels, etc., have been mixed up with this conception, and even the name of Shaman is derived from the Indian Buddhist ascetics (*Samano*); the old Finnish name was *Kam*. The only genuine part of the performance is the exorcism, which endows the priest-sorcerer with magic power, converts the drum into a witch's cauldron, and the spirits into a kind of charmed brew with which he heals and exorcises. This is primitive mysticism, recognisable in that it makes the priest into a spirit-god, solely by his ecstasy. So it has always been, and so it is now. Radloff has seen it all with his own eyes, and describes it in his work, *Aus Sibirien*.

We find similar things among other savage or half-civilised peoples. Always the same pompous ceremony, even where it is only a healing cure. In Africa, on the Loango coast, a black man lies sick on his mat. The sick man is not kept quiet as would be the case with us, but a fiendish noise of drums and rattles and bamboo guitars fills the hut. In the background crouches the holy ganga, the magician-doctor, who paints his skin with glaring colours. By the door of the hut burns a fire, and a flickering light in the distance announces the approach of a torchlight procession. A second ganga comes to the bed of the sick man. Like real surgeons the two priests open their cases, but the instruments they take out are tails of animals and aromatics, fetish images and such-like valuable matters.

The aromatics are thrown on the fire, and with deafening shouts and singing the priests now commence their incantations and to work their spells. They whirl round, jump about, dance and stamp, fume and rage, among the furniture, without knocking anything over, without falling, until at last both rush out of the door and disappear in the darkness.

In solemn state they return ; they have captured the spirits and are now themselves demons. One of them sits down on a low stool, twisting and turning himself and shaking his head as if he



would shake it off, until he becomes rigid ; deep silence reigns around. Suddenly one hears, coming as from a distance, a thin, piping voice ; that is the voice of the spirit in the ganga asking what they want of him. All answer in chorus, and the sufferer's complaint is fully described. Before the answer can come, more dances and antics have to be performed. The one ganga leaps about wildly, the other, the one who is sitting down, swinging his arms when the dancing one throws his legs about. A third arrives, who quickly paints himself, jumps on to the fire, and whirls and dances round, as if he were a blazing flame, or the fire-god himself. The other dancing ganga ties charms all round his body, and whirls and twists until he looks like one huge fetish. Now at last all the gods are collected at the sick man's bedside, and give the important information that his illness is caused by his having broken a family fast, called *quixilles*—a diagnosis, however, which a closer analysis proves to be false. The same ceremonies have therefore again to be gone through on the next day, and only after the chief of the gangas is completely beyond himself, and has been decked with a feather cap of towering height, in which the god is supposed to be seated, he declares that the illness is not due to *quixilles*, but is caused by *chimbinde*. This is worse, for it means that the ghost of a factory

man, lately dead, has got into the sick man's brain.

Thus far Bastian, who was an eye-witness of the whole performance (*Deutsche Expedition an der Loango Küste,* Jena, 1875). The same thing is found everywhere throughout the world where breeches are not worn, for, as is well known in our days, civilisation begins with the adoption of this most necessary article of clothing. Yet even among the decently clothed in China, Persia, and Turkey, these leaping and dancing performances for drawing near to the gods are exercised. They are the first step on the road of mysticism, and often, alas! too often, its devotees fall back to this primitive stage, where they have learnt to climb up to more elevated heights.

Stupefying with tobacco smoke is a sacred usage among the American Indians. When the Copenhagen University students sing in their smoking song: *Graviter fumando vir Jovis fit sodalis, inter vasta nubila requiescit talis*—they perhaps scarcely realise that there are people in this world to whom these words are solemn earnest, and who, through the blue tobacco clouds, commune with the gods. Of course the narcotic which the Indian draws from his pipe or his cigar is a good deal stronger than that inhaled by a modern smoker, and the Indian swallows the smoke until it makes him giddy, and the consequences are as serious as if he had had opium instead of tobacco in his pipe. Intoxication by smoking is well known among many nations. The same negroes whose grotesque dancing feast we have just considered, smoke hemp leaves—which they call *liamba*—to prepare themselves for the ceremony. And the Turks and other Orientals find their highest state of ecstatic bliss in hemp poison, *hashish*. The Brazilian medicine-man treats his patients preferably with tobacco. He smokes the tobacco and envelops his patient in a cloud of smoke while he administers a kind of massage, kneading him so vigorously that his roars are heard all over the village—that is to say, the roars of the doctor, not of the sick man. For it is the doctor who is the suffering party at these operations. The narcotic has brought him into such a state of frenzy that he is like a wolf, bear, and jaguar in one—quite beyond himself. Moreover, from what we know of the primitive art of healing, it is quite natural that the doctor and not the patient should take the medicine. The remedy is only intended to convoke the supernatural forces, and the true medicine man studies medicine in a most remarkable manner, by taking poison—like the Pontic Monarch—until no poison can do him any more harm. If he is to practise he must be able to swallow poison to an amount which would kill any ordinary

human creature, in order to convey the impression that humanity in him is dead, and that in his intoxicated condition he can change into another existence and become either a god or a demon in human shape. (Examples of this are given in Th. Achelis's book—*Die Extase*. Berlin, 1902.)

And so mysticism always leads to the same end, as long as religion occupies an *animistic* standpoint, *i.e.* as long as it consists in regarding the spirits of the departed, or the lower air-spirits, as their gods. The method is as simple as the belief. All that is evil is "being possessed of evil spirits," and can only be cured by the casting out of the spirits. Evil must be destroyed by evil, and he who wants to fight with demons must first himself become a demon. And this can only be done by getting outside of self, by being beyond oneself, as in madness or frenzy. Therefore the question is to find means by which sense and reason can thus be lost, and these are not far to seek. The animistic person also never attains beyond this stage of ecstasy. It is his ladder of ascent into the heavenlies; he knows no other, and only in so far as his ascent is fraught with pain and difficulty, be it for obtaining his dignity or in the exercise of his profession, only in so far can there be question of asceticism, or indeed of any approach to a moral action. When culture comes to such a people, these crude methods



suffice no longer. What is sacred becomes more exalted; the ghostly dances disappear, a circle of divinities is conceived, and he who desires to enter there, and himself become a god, is well aware that he can neither smoke, nor dance, nor sweat himself into it.

## II. CHINESE MYSTICISM

LET us next consider mysticism on the ancient cultural soil of China.

In this land, where the temperament of the people is absolutely opposed to anything of a mystical nature, in the midst of a practical, intelligent, industrious population, whose religion is morality, mysticism made its appearance, fully matured and self-conscious, about the same time that the apostle of morality, Kong-tse,[1] systematised the Chinese code of moral law. The " obscure sage," as Laotse was called, understood the art of living in seclusion so thoroughly that we hardly know anything about him, except that he was archivist to one of the kings of the Choy dynasty, and at a very high age was sent into exile. Before quitting his fatherland, one of the governors on the western frontier is said to have persuaded the celebrated sage to write a book on the tenets of his philosophy.

This book, called *Tao-te-King*, is very ambiguous. It may be said to be the first Chinese attempt at systematic writing, and moreover of a highly

[1] Better known to us by the Latin name of Confucius.





speculative character. But, in spite of the heaviness of the form, one gets occasional glimpses of a far-reaching, idealistic, and spiritual depth, which has procured for the author the fame of a Chinese Plato, and the book moreover breathes a purity and gentleness of spirit which remind one of Christian doctrines.

All the properties of true mysticism slumber in this ancient literary effusion. It would seem as if here, in the Far East, the groundwork had been laid for that which in the subsequent peregrinations of mysticism should receive more solid form. The three chords which mysticism always strikes, namely, alienation from the world, the doing away with personality and with self, reverberate here also, and they sound—and this is the remarkable part of it—perfectly Chinese, although constantly clashing with the normal system of Confucian doctrines, with all its practical and personal activity. Kong-tse did not like Laotse, and could not understand his teaching. He called him "a dragon soaring up to heaven," and for his noble principles he had only ridicule.

Yet—both were China's sons, and both reverently lived up to their sonship. The object of both was the establishment of the truest form of state, the wisest form of government, and as regards the people to teach them their duty as subjects. But the way taken by Laotse is as widely different

from that followed by Kong-tse as the flight of a pigeon differs from that of a fowl. Up into the highest heights he soars, and there cools his ardour before coming down again to eat from the same trough with the other inhabitants of the courtyard. By speculative methods he arrives in the end at the same moral conclusions for which Kong-tse, with practical common sense, made straightway; but Laotse reaches the final goal a better man, and would have made his people a better people than it is now, if it had not been the fate of the Chinese that Kong-tse's shoes fitted them better than Laotse's buskins.

The title alone, *Tao-te-King*, shows that in this book heaven is sought before the earth is considered. *Tao*, the first of the three words, means purely grammatically only "path"; but this "path" designates the absolute, the highest wisdom, the Godhead, or by whatever name it be called—the highest, as conceived by the mystic, is not so easily adequately expressed. Perhaps it would be safest to say that *Tao* means the ideal fundamental principle, or the ideal fundamental object of existence. The speculative, therefore, is number one. Second in importance is *te*, worldly morality, the course of life. *King* means book, and the book goes to prove how our life has been ordained by the divine Tao, and how we have to live it according to ideal and exalted principles. Religion is



not, as with Kong-tse, an appendix to morality, but an important stipulation for moral conduct.

The only thing that is clearly and definitely stated about Tao is that it is altogether indefinable, indescribable, and inexpressible, a truly mystic conception. If "Godhead" be substituted for Tao, we have to bear in mind that it is never a personal God one has to think of. It is a principle, abstract and inscrutable. "Something exists"—so it says in the *Tao-te-King* (chapter 25)—"which is incomprehensible, which is perfect, and which existed before heaven and earth were. It is silent, and without shape; it is the only thing inviolable, without change or variableness. It pervades all places. One might call it the mother of all things. Its name I know not, but I call it Tao. Were I to give it yet another name, I should call it '*The Great.*' The laws of men are from the earth, the laws of the earth are from heaven, the laws of heaven are from Tao."

Is this God or is it nature? If nature, then at all events a spiritualised nature, or the spirit of nature after the manner of pantheistic belief. Laotse is perfectly genuine in his mysticism, although in reality a pantheist, as good as any, in that he believes the deity to be a something which is in all things. And to the Chinese mind, accustomed to worship "heaven" as the highest, all-controlling will, this thought would not seem

unfamiliar. But Laotse emphatically rejects the naturalistic view here implied, and makes his Tao something more spiritual, therefore more exalted, than the heaven of the State religion.

The manner in which Tao expresses itself varies also considerably from the ordinary Chinese methods. In this land of commanding and obeying, where the upper classes order and the lower cringingly submit, a sage appears, proclaiming a condition of things in which there is neither commanding nor obeying. He preaches a constitution of the world based on free will, a God who will not be honoured for his own sake, a duty that is to be performed for its own sake only.

Laotse seems to have come to this conclusion, this forward step, by creating his world after the pattern of nature. For the ruling force in the realm of nature does not govern from lust of power, but because all things of their own accord put themselves in subjection under it. Therefore it says in the *Tao-te-King*, chapter 51 : " All things have come forth from Tao, and are nourished out of its abundance. All things receive their form in accordance with their nature, and are perfected according to their capacity. Therefore all things without exception are Tao, and praise its manifold workings. But not as by compulsion, but as a voluntary tribute. Tao then creates all things ; by Tao they live, grow, mature, are maintained and



protected. Tao creates all things, yet it does not claim possession. Tao leads all things through all the stages of development, but makes no boast of its doings. Tao brings all things to maturity, yet exercises no control over them. This is its mysterious activity." The involuntariness of its energy, the mystery of the course of life as reflected in nature, and the protest of the natural institutions against the institutions of this world, with their exaction, their coercion, and their ostentation, Laotse expresses in these ambiguous words : " Tao is inactive, yet nothing exists that Tao has not created,"—which is as much as to say : All that happens is involuntary, and involuntary all things must be.

Yet even this conclusion is merely pantheistic. The mysticism in the system only comes to light when the question is asked : In what relation does Tao stand to man ; or rather, in what relation does man stand to Tao. The answer is briefly : We must be like Tao ; we must make the law of Tao our law, but this we can only do by being imbued with Tao. Therefore morality, *te*, forms the second portion of the system. And the idea is that where Tao is realised, *te* necessarily follows. Hence man's first duty is to put his soul in order, that there may be room in it for Tao ; to cleanse it from all egotism, and the lusts, passions, self-will, avarice, and love of power, resulting therefrom. When

all these are banished, then Tao can take immediate possession. Then, morally, one has become part of Tao. " The wise man sets himself in the lowest place, and is raised to the highest. He treats his own personality as if it were a stranger to him, yet he does not lose sight of his purpose." Is it not so ? By pursuing neither a personal nor a private motive, the object is attained. Learn of the heavens and of the earth. Why is their existence so long ? Because they exist not for themselves. Learn of the water, which benefits all, yet claims nothing for itself. Learn of the woman, for she is quiet and gentle, and therefore easily rules man. Like them, Tao is a silent power, and all men can become Tao.

However universally human this philosophy may appear, one feels oneself nevertheless on Chinese territory when one begins to consider the separate virtues which constitute *te*. There is no question of a fervid or visionary absorption into the divine power, nor, in the original code of Taoism—later it may have been otherwise—of ascetic self-restraint or ecstatic self-abandonment, for ridding oneself of one's own individuality. No, all the requirements bear the stamp of common sense. The three cardinal virtues are *goodness*, *economy*, and *modesty*. Kong-tse's demands are of a similar nature. Only these virtues have a deeper meaning when Laotse exacts them. For in his



doctrine about *goodness* the mystic goes so far that he—like Christ—makes goodness the indisputable standard for all our actions : evil must be overcome by good, good must be returned for evil. " To him who is good to me, I am good likewise ; to him who is angry with me, I also am good ; so all will be made good." That this moral reflection is not altogether Chinese, we see from Kong-tse's mocking comment : " If I am to be good to the evil, wherewith then shall I reward the good ? " His maxim is : " Goodness for the good, justice for the evil."

*Modesty* also is in Laotse's doctrine more than a rule of wordly wisdom. What he teaches is true humility, always with the consciousness that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted. He comprehends under modesty also that quiet reserve by which one husbands one's strength and prolongs one's life in proportion as the friction of this mundane life is escaped from.

Here we get in a compressed form a foretaste of the mystic's life and conduct as seen wherever it is found exempt from ecstasy and asceticism. This craving for a life of peace and purity is the lovable side of mysticism, and it is not by chance that it showed itself at an early stage among the peace-loving Chinese. Nor is it chance that yet another characteristic feature of the mystic stood out sharp and clear on Chinese ground, namely, the despising of outward forms ; this, in China, where

form is sacred, and all life a ceremony! Laotse knew of things more sacred than forms, and he searched after another and a better life; "*Not the life one lives, but the life which lives.*" Therefore he broke with all outward show, and did away with formality. But this, in the eyes of good Chinamen, is shocking profanity, a sign of want of morals! So it is that always the old shells must break if a new shoot is to spring up; but nowhere the breaking through has been done more boldly than here in China, because the old shell was so very old, so hard, so beautiful, and so graceful.

Nevertheless, true Chinaman as Laotse was, he did not follow up his theories to the inevitable consequence to which a self-absorbing and contemplative life must lead, namely, that this life must be lived *individually*. That thought is not attractive to the Mongol mind, for the Mongols are sociably inclined, and the Chinese in particular. They are only members of the body of the State, only children of one large family. Therefore Laotse's moral teaching as well as Kong-tse's results in political ideals. Unity and the public welfare is their final aim; but it is not attained, as in the theories of rationalism, by a voluntary co-operation of enlightened men, or by fraternisation in the common pursuits of life. No, if Tao is to come to full realisation among men, *one* must stand at the head, one who knows the "way"



and can lead the people. Laotse imagines this wise man to be a great sovereign, who knows how to rule because he knows that he is in unison with Tao. This sovereign is to rule with generosity and without thought of self, like Tao; of their own free will his subjects shall serve him, because he lets the influence of Tao pass over them. For where Tao is effectively present, all fit into their proper places; even the animals then become willingly submissive to the peace-loving ruler. All things in this State are done without coercion, war and sentence of death are done away with, pure and generous customs will be seen among the people, the ruler's wisdom and example will educate them up to these. But if his people are to trust him implicitly, if they are to be satisfied with their lot, then, says Laotse, they must not be too much enlightened in worldly matters.

And in this statement the mystic again betrays himself. It is not the absolutist but the obscurant who speaks. The gospel of ignorance has often enough been preached by mystic lips. One thing only is necessary, and that is the inner light, which in China shines forth from above, radiates from the person of the Emperor, in so far as he is the son of heaven, and interprets the will of heaven to the people—an old doctrine. Only what in the State religion was a myth, and in astrology a cult, becomes in the occult science of

Taoism an inner worth, philosophic piety and morality. The highest comes from above but at the same time from within, and the law which all must obey is written in the heart.

This is Taoism. Nothing more beautiful has ever been conceived on ancient heathen soil, and therefore nothing is so sad as the fate of Taoism.

Still—in its peculiar, sad way, Tao *has* prevailed. It permeates the whole nation, it is practically the vital strength of its existence. We see this from the fact that Confucianism has during all the past ages been tinged with Taoism. The divine will moves like a mystic power among the worldly institutions of State philosophy, and the intercessors between heaven and earth which are found in heathen mythology as well as in Christian worship are the means by which the transition from the ideal to the real is effected.

Side by side with true Taoism there runs a stream of lower order, which in China meets us at every end and turn. Favoured or disfavoured by time, Tao has degenerated into witchcraft, into a magic power which is practised by professional, wandering priests. From them one can buy Tao for a trifle, and be filled with strength which drives away toothache, ghosts, vermin, and creditors. For this is the reverse side of all mysticism, that it makes God into a power, and



life in God into an absorption of divine power. Thus it practically becomes mesmerism. And the inner life, the chief object to be attained, becomes an outward show, quite as prominent as the external life one is trying to subdue. Liberty of thought thus degenerates into thoughtlessness, and unrestrained morality into wantonness.—How often has this not been seen where the motions of the human heart have been allowed free course?—and this has been the fate of Chinese mysticism.

No garden gave it sheltering care, therefore it now grows like a weed in the field.

## III. INDIAN MYSTICISM

In India, where all things grow luxuriantly and vigorously, the growth of mysticism has also been most luxuriant and lasting. As far back as research can reach, the germs of mysticism are found everywhere; and up to the present day it still flourishes there, so much so that the people returning home from India carry the seeds of it back with them in their clothes. But as are the people of India so also is their mysticism: a mysticism of *meditation* and of *renunciation*. For the Hindus, although our kinsmen in descent, language, and disposition, have become a meditative, passive, and resigned race. There have been times when they were heroes; there have been times when they subjected the earth, and drew from it the wealth of India. But there has also come a time when these cultivators of the rich soil, in the midst of their tropical wealth, sank into inactivity, and—where the hand refused its service, speculation became rife and mysticism flourished.

The mysticism of the Hindus did not originate in philosophy, any more than their religion from





the first was a philosophical religion. The beginning was adoration, worship, and therein the earliest elements of mysticism are to be found. In his description of Brahman sacrifices, Oldenberg (*Rel. of the Veda*, p. 326) goes fully into the matter of the mystical virtues supposed to be contained therein. The more important Hindu sacrifices have at all times included the participation of the food offered. This custom, which also prevails among the Semitic races, has for these latter been explained by Robertson Smith, as expressive of a longing for union with the divinity, a kind of fellowship, and eating and drinking together in consolidation of the compact. This view and these practices greatly furthered mysticism among them, but this was not the train of thought followed by the Hindus.

The offerings made to the old Hindu deities were solely for the purpose of purchasing the good things of this life, and only the crumbs falling from the table of the god were the portion of man. But these crumbs are of extraordinary weight, and possess mysterious power. For that of which the deity has partaken has, by reason of the divine proximity, become filled with divine potency, and the remnants of the feast are thus converted into elements of a higher order. That these rest are unsafe even to touch is a widespread belief, and only the initiated or those ritually

qualified thereto can without risk partake thereof; for them indeed they possess great medicinal virtue. Worthy to eat and drink of the offering are the officiating priest and the "Sacrificer" or donor of the sacrifice, the person who pays for it, together with his household. His wife partakes of the sacrifice offered to the departed ancestors in order that she may be blest with male issue, and any of the family suffering from any lingering disease also receive a morsel. When a candidate for the priesthood is admitted into the house of a Brahman, a small portion of the sacrificial food is given to him, with the words: "*May Agni*" (the god of fire and of the priesthood) "*give thee wisdom.*" Very telling also are the marriage customs. When the bridegroom enters his house he divides the sacrificial food with his bride, saying these words: "With this food, the bond of life, the bright and varied thread, the knots of which are truth, I bind thy heart and thy spirit. Thy heart shall be my heart and my heart shall be thy heart. Food is the bond of life, with it I bind thee." This is sorcery, but it is also mysticism. The union of the young couple is symbolised by the joint-participation of the mystical, *i.e.* the sacrificial food, filled with the divine substance.

The same mystical efficacy must be attributed to the libation, the drink-offering, *Soma*. This also was a powerful curative, a life-elixir, and no



doubt, originally, a draught of immortality, the same as it has always been for the Persians. In the Hindu sacrifice it served primarily as a bait for the gods. But a glimmering of the original idea of the Soma-offering is found in the fact that the Brahman himself drinks of the Soma, doubtless in order that he may thereby be filled with divine power. This power, however, could scarcely be attributed to the Soma in its character as the dregs of the cup of the gods, but must rather be looked upon as a survival of its primitive magic charm, which is believed to lift the Brahman by intoxication into those divine realms whence he draws his sanctity. Here we have then, in the very midst of the highly developed Hindu ritual, a bit of Shamanism, and we realise that the refined Hindu is not too refined to indulge in some of the crude negro or old Indian customs expressive of the lowest form of mysticism, even if in their sacrificial rites these occupy but a subordinate place.

Thus there is in Hindu mysticism a background —if not an immediately influential one—of sacramental mysticism in the sacrifice, and of ritualistic mysticism in the priesthood, but its real development is found where ritual is superseded by speculation. The life of the Hindu priest was divided into two periods: from the completion of his studies as scholar, to his service at the altar

as priest ; and from there to a life of seclusion and religious meditation. What Rudyard Kipling tells us of these hermit-priests living in forests, coincides exactly with what Kalidasa describes in his *Sakuntala*. Sometimes they live in companies, but more often in absolute solitude, the latter years of their life being spent in strict self-denial and heavy penances. Originally this was a device for getting rid of the old people, but the decree very soon passed into a link of the priestly *Ordo Salutis*, and the old folks were not so weakened with age that they did not take advantage of the situation, and converted the compulsory period of old age meditation into the recognised road to salvation. Two roads were open to attain salvation : the road of action (*Karmamarga*), which they had walked during their time of ministry at the altar, and the road of knowledge (*jñānamarga*) which they would now follow. And it was easy to see that this latter was the higher one. Their whole life long they had been the slaves of the gods. For twenty years they had learned Veda-hymns by heart, and for another thirty years they had recited them. A thousand times they had brewed the sacred drink and poured it on the altar flames, had killed goats and antelopes, had chanted and muttered and exorcised spirits ; and yet—as concerns their spiritual welfare—they were no further than at the beginning of their career.



After all, can these gods save me ? Indra, the chief of the gods, who is always thirsty, always quarrelsome, who is always doing foolish things, and is, moreover, henpecked ? Varuna, the king of justice, who is always on the watch, and punishes us for sins we have never committed ? Usha, the virgin queen of the morning, who goes about half-naked in search of a lover ; and Rudra, the black-blue devil, who pierces us with the arrow of death ? East and west, gods everywhere, and all want to be supreme. Always the one to whom the sacrifice is made has to be assured that he alone is the mighty One, that he is the only One. Who is the mighty One ; who is the only One ? There can be but one. Or, more correctly, one only can be the One : the spiritual element which animates all the gods, that divine power which makes them into gods, that magic power which gives them their potency, the breath which has given them life. That magic power is called *Brahma* ; it was the name given to the mysterious power of prayer which all the gods must yield to. Breath is called *Atman*, and these two words, *Brahma* and *Atman*, now became the name for the divine principle.

The way leading to this divinity, however, was different to the one whereby the old gods were approached. Since it was by thought alone that he could be apprehended, it is clear that by thought alone one can get access to him. Having

formed a conception of him in one's own mind, one possesses him for oneself alone; and they only who can so conceive or grasp him can hold communion with him. Therefore the road of knowledge alone is of any avail. Every theologian has learned to distinguish between theosophy and mysticism: the theosophist, it is said, loses himself in the conception of God, the mystic in his relation towards God. How little this supposed difference holds good we see in Hindu mysticism. For Hindu mysticism recognises no other way for entering into relation with God than that of losing oneself in the conception of God; as soon as God is fully apprehended, the relation with God is also established.

And with what spiritual energy these old Hindu priests have penetrated into the mystery of the Godhead, how deep has become their conception of God since first they began to meditate upon it! "Deep" is the Hindu meaning for spiritual; and spiritual is in the first place uncorporeal. Not an atom of what we call material may be left in the Brahman; even his spirit must be active without the help of bodily organs; "he sees without eyes and hears without ears, he speaks not in words, he even thinks without thoughts and breathes without drawing breath." Notwithstanding this latter subtle accomplishment, the Hindus call their god *Atman* (which means breath), not only because this



is the most uncorporeal designation they can find for him, but also because, like the breath which is the sign of life, or, according to the Hindu belief, life itself, he animates all that lives and breathes, even dead nature.

Being uncorporeal he is also free from all bodily emotions, impressions, and conditions. "He feels neither sorrow, nor hunger, nor thirst, he can neither change nor die, he is exempt from all evil." But as he so divests himself of his body he also puts aside that of which the body should be the expression, his personality. "Personality" is, to the Hindu mind, limitation, and in God there can be no limitation. Further still, this diving into the abstract is carried. In God there may not even be consciousness, for he who is conscious of anything, stands with his consciousness opposite to this thing, but outside of the Godhead there is nothing that can be placed over against it. It stands to reason that no qualities can be attributed to this God, for qualities necessarily imply parts of a being, and the Deity has no parts. Therefore also this being cannot be defined any closer; one cannot say it is so or so, the only thing one can say is that it is neither so nor so (*na iti na iti*).

But by taking thus everything away from Brahma, does he not himself become nothing? No, on the contrary, says the Hindu, he becomes all in all. Just because in the widest sense of the

word he is everything, therefore nothing can be said of him in detail. Because he is infinite we cannot clothe him with any finite attributes. The corporeal also is comprehended in him, although he himself has nothing in common with corporeal things. All things flow from him and all things return to him; he is the beginning and the end. Nay, what is more, he is the only reality, the only eternal existence. All that is material is perishable, he alone, the pure spirit, is imperishable; what we see with our eyes is vain and changeable, he alone is unchangeable. And so on and on the Hindu argues until we become dizzy. What we call the realities of life, he calls shadows, vanity, and deception (*maya*); what we are often tempted to call an illusion, an ideal, is for the Hindu the only reality. And things only become real when they are meditated upon as emanating from and resting on their ideal. Emanating from it not as by creation by a personal god, but coming forth out of Brahma, immediately, as the spark springs from the flame, as vapour rises up from the sea, or as the rain drops down from the cloud.

Now, if all things emanate from Brahma, you and I are also out of him; if he is all, he is also you and me; if he is the breath of the universe, he is also that which breathes and lives in you and in me.

This is the last thought in this chain of meditation, and upon which all depends. This is the saving



power. Canst thou think of thyself as a spark springing from the celestial fire and sinking back again into it? Canst thou feel thyself as a drop rising out of the heavenly ocean and falling back again into its bosom? Canst thou apply to thyself the potent word, *tat tvam asi*, "this is thou," or *brahmo 'mi*, "I am Brahma," then thou art blessed, then thou art saved, freed from all finiteness, from birth and death and new birth, for then thou hast realised that thine own being is like Atman's: *sat-cit-ananda*, pure existence, thought, infinity.

That this solution can only be attained by the way of meditation is clear enough. Insight is what is needed, and Brahma, thus thought out, is meditation. "Even as a lump of salt is only a condensed mass of savour, so this divine being is a condensed mass of meditation." Hence the philosophical pride of the Hindu recluses. Crude knowledge, of which ordinary people boast, is only a knowledge of external things which at bottom is ignorance, lack of knowledge. It is only like playing with the outer shell, but the immortal kernel has never been reached. With all one's knowledge one remains subject to birth and death. Therefore it is said:—

> "Joyless indeed are these dim worlds,
> Covered with darkness;
> There all are going to Death
> Who are not enlightened by knowledge.

But who has grasped the Atman
Being conscious : 'I am He!'
Why should he cling to his body?
What will he desire? Whose favour win?"

And therefore the Brahman says to his pupil :—

"Nay, widely different and opposite
Is what is called 'Knowing'—'Not Knowing'
Look Naciketas striving hard for knowledge!
The crowd of sinful lusts cannot confound him.

But in Not Knowing's gloomy depths are groping
Those fancying themselves wise men, great scholars;
Thus always to and fro the fools are running
Like blind men led by leaders blind."

Soon, however, it was realised that it could not be done by means of ordinary meditation alone. For that which has no attributes and cannot be defined, how can it be comprehended by meditation; where has thought to start from? And again, if Atman is that which thinks in me, how then can the thinking in me ever obtain a sight of him? No, it was now said, one cannot think oneself into him, only by inspiration from himself, by gracious revelation, can he be apprehended.

"Not by reason can Atman be laid hold of,
Not by intellect and much knowledge of Scripture;
Only they whom he elects can comprehend him,
To them Atman reveals himself."

Or if not by direct revelation of Atman himself, then by a sudden inspiration, disclosing his being without any gradual process of thought :—



"Not by talking, not by thought,
Not by sight can he be grasped;
'He is,' by this word alone,
And in no other wise can he be reached."

This new view threw the old "meditation" methods into disrepute :—

"Blind are they who go about in ignorance,
But blinder still are they whose knowledge satisfies them."

Thus Indian logic, austere, inexorable, proved its fallacy, and we see that what underlies it is, after all, pure mysticism, whose object is to grasp the incomprehensible, and believes that man's highest attainment is to become one with the incomprehensible. Knowledge ends with the realisation that more than simple meditation is required to bring about this union, namely, a special grace, a special organ, a special state of mind.

Where knowledge failed, art stepped in : the art above all arts to which the Hindu applies himself most assiduously, the art of raising himself above the life of this world by rapture, forgetting himself in ecstasy, and producing this ecstasy by penances,—the art which in India is known as *Yoga*. In the word itself—from the same root

as the Latin word *jungo*, "to unite"—the mystical union is expressed. He who practises *Yoga* binds himself to the supernatural, he binds his thoughts into that one collective sense which will take him out of the finite. *Yoga* is still practised by Hindu fakirs and by them brought to a state of perfection which only too often degenerates into jugglery, and leads us to believe that, after all, the old self-restraining methods merely aspired at a purely external control over the body, its needs and desires. To the true *Yogin* (he who practises Yoga), however, it was not merely a question of subduing the body, but rather of helping the spirit to triumph ; of raising the human *Atman* into union with the divine *Atman*. *Fasting* is an excellent means to this end, for fasting chastens the body and inflames the spirit. Celibacy follows as a natural outcome, and strict solitude is a necessary stipulation, for the perfect repose of the soul. The Yoga practiser then preferably squats, huddled together, remaining immovable in the same posture, staring at his own body, his navel or the tip of his nose, until sense and reason become confused, until the external sight becomes dim, until through this self-hypnotism the internal light is produced. "Breathing" is also a favourite practice of these ascetics : a very slow and well-controlled inhaling and exhaling of the breath, by which—whether



from carbonic acid poisoning of the blood or from other causes—a particularly speculative state of mind is produced.

So, for instance, at the commencement of the play, *The Toy-Cart*, we see the Brahmans sitting—

"Cross-legged, with breath drawn in,
With snakes coiled round their knees,
Their senses subdued, freed from worldly thoughts,
Their eyes fixed, thinking only Brahma
In self-forgetting worship; Sambhoo the Good guard thee."

And in the same manner this highest state of absorption is described at length in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (vi. line 11 and foll. Max Müller's translation) :—

"A devotee should constantly devote his self to abstraction, remaining in a secret place, alone, with his mind and self restrained, without expectations and without belongings. Fixing his seat firmly in a clean place, not too high nor too low, and covered over with a sheet of cloth, a deerskin, and blades of Kusho-grass—and there seated on that seat, fixing his mind exclusively on one point, with the workings of the mind and senses restrained, he should practise devotion for purity and self. Holding his body, head, and neck even and unmoved, remaining steady looking at the tip of his own nose, and not looking about in all directions, with a tranquil self, devoid of

fear and adhering to the rules of Brahma pupils, he should restrain his mind and concentrate it on me, and sit down engaged in devotion regarding me as his final goal. Thus, constantly devoting his self to abstraction, a devotee whose mind is restrained attains that tranquillity which culminates in final emancipation and assimilation with me."

So it was formerly and so it is still. This is bliss; this is salvation; the Hindu knows no other. Religions change and vanish in India. Brahmanism gives way to Buddhism, Buddhism in its turn is supplanted by the various Hindu sects. Pantheism becomes Atheism, and Atheism, Theism—yet in spite of all these changes *Nirvana* always crops up as highest aim, *Yoga* always as the only way to it. The deity is a conception which has to be apprehended: human life is a barrier which has to be broken down: union with God is highest rapture: penance, a holy joy.

Foreign religions have free entrance in India, but before they have taken proper root they become enervated. Even harsh Islam grows weak and mystical on Indian soil, and Christianity is for the Hindu contained in the words which in the Gospel according to St. John are put into the mouth of Jesus, with that mystic touch so



peculiar to its author: "I and the Father are one"! Here the Hindu's heart beats faster, for is not this the old truth, which for thousands of years has been claimed by all the religions of his native land?

"Yes, truly," the Saviour had to say those words, we all must say the same if we would be saved: "God and I, we are one!"

# IV. PERSIAN MYSTICISM

WHILE the Hindu mortified his flesh and spun the thread of his life in incessant meditation, his nearest of kin on the other side of the Hindu-kush moved in quite a different world of thought, with quite a different view of life. The history of the mighty Persian Empire gives most eloquent proofs of the courage and the determination of its people, of their military prowess, their practical common sense, their social stability. Avesta, the sacred book of the Persians, speaks moreover of their clear intellect, their earnestness in distinguishing between good and evil, between purity and impurity, their unrelenting zeal in subduing the evil and helping the good to conquer.

One would hardly suppose that among these practical, intelligent people, with their clear power of discernment, mysticism could ever have found a fruitful soil. And yet the elements of Shamanism can be detected in the old sacrificial rites of the Parsee priests, and in their intoxicating beverage, drunk in honour of the gods. The Indian Soma is by the Magi called *haoma*, and the





hymn of praise, sung in its honour, sufficiently proves its marvellous efficacy. Haoma's virtue increases as one sings its praises, and he who lauds it is certain of victory. Haoma brings health and prosperity in home and city. Other inebriation comes with anger and heavily armed, but inebriation through haoma brings light-heartedness. And he who caresses haoma as a little child will feel its exhilarating power. "I come to thee, haoma; as thy friend and singer I come, for Ormuz himself calls thy friends and singers greater than the angels."

Thus the priests drank salvation to themselves, nor did the supreme ruler neglect the holy duties of the cup, when on New Year's Day, in royal state and with the crown on his head, he pledged his people in the cup, which on that occasion was filled with wine. The people did not lag behind in this matter either, for there was yet another cup, called the *Yima-cup*, the same that the old King Yima, the god of the golden age, had drunk in the garden of the gods. This cup had gradually become the people's drink, and its dregs were found to possess the same magic efficacy, which has always been attributed, before as well as after, to the sparkling juice of the grape.

Whether the holy delirium they thus imbibed was of a mystical nature,—as this highly excited condition is generally supposed to be,—is difficult

to ascertain, but the popularity of this sacramental and festive beverage certainly enables us better to realise that even on Persian soil a mysticism could be cultivated which centred in the cup, and the adherents of which—like the old haoma priests—approached their god as friends and singers. Out of this singing and drinking mysticism has come forth the beautiful Persian poetry which to this day is sung by Eastern people, and, what is more, re-echoes in our Western poetry from the time that Goethe wrote his *West-Eastern Divan*, and Rückert, with more learning and in stricter imitation, put Persian songs on German lips. Out of Indian mysticism evolved philosophy, out of Persian mysticism, poetry. Such widely different results were produced by the same force in two so widely different nations. Both, however, have brought their art to an equally high degree of perfection.

The floods of fate had to sweep mightily over the Persian people ere, from the height of their political greatness and fearless, open fight for the good things of this life, they could sink down into dreaming and poetical mysticism. Their national independence, their ancestral faith, even their language, had to be destroyed before their minds had become receptive enough to be impregnated with mysticism.

For mysticism, with its fermentative nature



and claire-obscure thinking, cannot flourish in the world of freedom and in the fresh air of active vitality. A certain amount of dull depression must weigh down the soul before this timid thing can manifest itself. Islam, strong, severe, relentless, invaded the Persian dominions in the eighth century. Here, if anywhere, its hold had a depressing effect on the people, for curt and stern and implicit are its demands. But the austerity and marked simplicity of Mohammedanism, which enabled it to make such rapid progress, also meant that where it did strike root it never penetrated very deeply into the ground. They who accepted the belief had but to conform to its tenets, make their confessions, say their prayers, keep the fasts and the feasts—beyond this it exacted nothing, because it had not much more to offer. Deeper understanding and fuller knowledge the new converts had to find for themselves, and if they were experts in the art of dissembling, called *Ketman*—and what Asiatic Mussulman is not ?—they could adhere to and carry about with them, hidden under the new cloak, the whole of their former equipment of thoughts, beliefs, feelings, manners, and customs, and at home, within their own four walls, discard the new cloak altogether.

Under the dominion of Islam, the individual life of the Persians developed into a strong

network of roots which has become the basis upon which the culture of the Eastern Caliphate—although it goes by an Arabian name—has been built; from its politics, customs, and dress, to its arts, science, and poetry, even to its religious innovations. Among these latter we must make special mention of that form of mysticism which expresses itself in verse-making and drinking, sometimes sublime, sometimes foolish, known as *Sufism*.

Sufism, so called because the first adherents of this sect, dressed in white wool (*suf*), came originally from Arabia. The sober-minded Semites never had much inclination towards mysticism; on the contrary, they are only too conscious of the distance between God and man, and of what is expected of man in order that he may gain the approbation of the Most High. Yet there have been among them excitable and emotional natures, to whom the contemplative has been congenial, and there have been people even in Arabia and Palestine to whom the Mohammedan admonition to meditate on the name of God has been a welcome excuse for a speculative absorption and losing of self in reflecting upon the most Holy One.

In Persia, the growth and development of this inner piety under the influence of Islam was very different. Here, a cultured, well-educated class



of people reluctantly embraced Islam, and bowed to its precepts with undisguised irony. Here it came in contact with a cheerful, happy, pleasure-loving people whose most sacred duty had been from ancient times to get all the good they could out of life, and had learned very intelligently to enjoy life; but it also struck upon a beaten nation, whose cheerfulness was mingled with sadness, nay, even with despair, and to whom the pessimism of India was a dangerous neighbour.

Sufism is made up of three chief factors—the order of succession is immaterial—the monotheism of the Koran, suppressed Persian cheerfulness, and Indian asceticism and philosophy; or rather, let us say, it is not made up at all, it is an independent whole, fed by these three factors, and brought to maturity by them. It is, in fact, that condition which underlies all mysticism and often completely masters it, and which is known as *quietism*. Quietism—a state of exquisite exhaustion, in which every limb is in complete repose, in which thinking becomes brooding absorption, while the soul revels in melancholy sensuality—or senselessness—is the Oriental's most cherished experience, his paradise on earth.

The more he is weakened by the oppressiveness of the climate, or languishes under arbitrary administration, poverty, national disorder, or

individual disadvantages, the more comfort he finds in roaming those nameless distances which are untouched by earthly change, or in losing himself in ecstatic self-abandonment—a condition from which no external power can rouse him.

And therefore he drinks; drinks, regardless of Koran and bastinado, drinks to-day like the Persian poets of the Middle Ages drank before him. "Drunkenness," says Gobineau, "is the hereditary sin of the central Asiatic." This vice, which Mohammed fought against so zealously, all the people succumb to. Priests as well as kings spend their nights in drinking. Ladies of the royal family as well as bazaar girls tumble on to their carpets at midnight, totally drunk; and "cold tea," as *arrak* is delicately called, or even European brandy, flows freely in the so-called "tea house."

"And yet they do not drink or go into these excesses for the sake of making merry with their friends, nor because of the exhilarating effects of intoxication, nor for the love of the liquor itself, for the Asiatic detests the taste of wine and brandy. While drinking, he holds his handkerchief to his nose, and makes faces as he swallows the drink like medicine. He drinks because it is the quickest way for getting into that condition when one no longer tastes or feels, a condition of complete



stupefaction. *That* is the inducement; for the stupor of intoxication is the height of his desire." [1]

On this soil of Oriental human nature, Sufism must be seen to be understood. What outwardly distinguishes this white community from the orthodox Mussulman is their disregard of the external forms and usages of Mohammedanism. For the untutored all these formalities may be quite fitting, but for those whose spirits have been illumined from above, they are unworthy, food for babes, and child's play. To the mind preparing to meet the Most High, dogmas and moral teachings are worthless. All respect to the prophet!—he was a highly gifted man, and possibly had interviews with the angel Gabriel, but whether he correctly understood him is another matter. His book—or part of it at any rate—needs to be revised before it can be used with perfect confidence.

The antipathy with which they regard the official religion—necessarily only expressed in whispers and in secret—curiously enough fills these distant Asiatics with a great admiration for Voltaire, of whom the Russians have told them that he hated the Church and especially the priesthood. They have read none of his writings,

[1] A. de Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, 2nd ed., p. 68 and foll.

but it gives them immense satisfaction to know that they have a great European sage on their side.[1]

All mysticism is antagonistic to the Church, or, perhaps more correctly, despises all outward show and ceremony. We have heard how the Hindu Brahmans extolled the "road of meditation" at the cost of the "road of action," and the mystics of the Middle Ages and of modern Romanticism tell us the same thing. The more outward ceremonial there is in a religion, the more determinately the mystic turns away from it, hence it is that Roman Catholicism makes more mystics than Protestantism, and this is also the reason that Islam, the very essence of which is in outward appearance, has produced the most luxuriant mysticism. But mystics always act in semi-secrecy. They take care not to break openly with the State religion, for their soul desires peace, and this they gladly purchase at the price of seeming outward obedience. They are indifferent to all external things, therefore they neglect or observe them as occasion demands. "What need can there be for Gabriel's interference where direct divine light is the guide?" This idea underlies all the scorn and ridicule lavished by mystic poets on praying and kneeling, fasts and

[1] A. de Gobineau, *Trois ans en Asie*, p. 323 and foll. 1859.



ablutions, Bible texts and rosaries; and yet some of those scoffers knew the Koran by heart, and one has hardly ever heard of a Sufi being turned out of a mosque.

Not in the Church would they meet one another, but in their inner life. What they have in common, what binds them together, are the inner joys and sorrows between which the mystic soul is continually swayed. How is it that voluptuous living always goes hand in hand with despair? Is it because sensual enjoyment is followed by remorse, or because grief wants to drown itself in pleasure?

The latter was certainly the original design in Sufism: it was the vanquished nation that took to drinking. As we listen more attentively to their songs of lamentation, we become aware how by degrees the theme changes, and it is the epicure who complains that his day of feasting is so short. And this among a people whose days were not by any means of short duration! It is rather hard on the anti-alcohol statisticians that some of the celebrities of Sufism were over a hundred years old, that they even have on record a man who reached the age of a hundred and fifty. His complaint is surely of some weight, where he sings: "For a few moments longer I still hoped to indulge my desires, but, alas! my breath stopped. Alas! at the table

of life, laden with goodly dishes, I sat down and ate for a few short moments, and Fate spoke: it is enough."

"Knowest thou, thou cage of bones," it says in another passage, "that thy soul is a bird and thy name a breath? When the bird escapes from the cage and shakes off its fetters, it will not a second time become thy prey. Make use of the hour, the world lasts but a moment."

"Many times after we are gone the roses will bring forth buds, and the young green unfold itself. Many a summer and winter and spring will be, when we are dust and ashes."

The philosophical basis of this pessimism in the Persian poets is the same as that of the Hindu philosophers, and probably borrowed from these latter. What we call the world is not actually existing, not even true. It is imagination, a dream, a delusion. "All the tangible things of this world are but the outcome of thine imagination," it says. "They are as unreal as the circle which thou seemest to see when whirling a stone round at the end of a string." Life is a sleep and a dream. "Thou sleepest, and what thou seest are dream-pictures. All that thou seest proceeds from thine imagination. When thou awakest on the resurrection morning, then shalt thou understand that all was but a delusion."



What, then, is true? Where is reality?

In God; only in Him and in His paradise. "Material things are the shadows of that other world, and," says Hafiz, "perhaps thy face is a reflection of the divine light. Truly this is so; this is no delusion." But we who only see the reflected image and walk in shadows, can say no more about this remote and hidden reality than that it exists. "Science hangs its head and weeps. Never will it fathom the mystery of life. Brood on it no longer, science cannot think it out. It cannot get beyond vague words." . . . "Intellect," it says elsewhere, "is as an ass sticking in the mud."

Is there no means of escape? Can God be nothing to us, because He is altogether incomprehensible? Are we fettered to our delusions, to our impotent intellect? No, surely not! The reflected image and the shadows teach us that from God irradiates *beauty* and *love*. All beauty must be a reflection of His being, all love must be a longing for Him. Wilt thou be like Him? Then consider the beauty of this world. Wilt thou see Him? Then enjoy the world so thoroughly that thou perceivest Him therein. Give thyself up to thine ardent, longing desire, and it will lead thee to Him. Love leads the thoughts up to God; whether it be an earthly or a heavenly love, it makes the heart susceptible to receive

God. And thus the devout Sufi finds the way, finds life. " He buries himself in contemplation, and dives down into the sea of revelation." Therefore Church and priest and scripture are superfluous to him. Safe on the Sultan's breast he needs neither messenger nor message.

One specially favourite designation the Sufi has for his God. He calls him " Friend," or " The Beloved." For his love is erotic and of great tenderness. He sighs for his God, and sings to Him, as the nightingale to the rose. Listening and longing he spends the silent watches of the night. Intoxicated by the perfume of the rose, and allured by the song of the nightingale, he receives in nature, among the beds and bushes of the garden, a foretaste of that heavenly meeting which will once take place. Nay, so fully can he enjoy it here in anticipation, when he gives himself up to his musings, so completely can the scent of the roses overpower him, that he becomes stupefied by it. " I intended, when I came to the rosebush to gather roses in the lappet of my cloak as a gift to my Friend, but the perfume of the roses intoxicated me, and the cloak slipped out of my hand."

So fantastical is this amorousness—no wonder, then, that it led to verse-making. So poetical it is that it always craves for beauty, and withal so God-seeking that all beauty is only beautiful



because it flows from God. In the object of his earthly affection he embraces his God, for the kiss of his beloved and the face of his beloved are to him but the reflection of the impending joy and beauty of that divinely blessed meeting.

All he enjoys or suffers, he enjoys or suffers for the sake of his Love. " Whoso lives his life other than for the Beloved, he shall be rejected, be he Adam himself."

Death alone can bring perfect union. Therefore to die is bliss. To him who loves truly, the cup of death from the hand of the Beloved is a cup of joy. The last word of the poet Jelaleddin Rumi was : " Death is the only vesture which separates me from the object of my affection. For must we not desire that light should be fused into light, and that our unclothing should lead to our union with the Beloved ? "

Now, how is this blessed encounter effected ? Its chief peculiarity is not the passion of the devotion, but the complete self-surrender, the emptying of self, which also is its consummation. " Learn from the moth what love is ! It gives up its life, is consumed by the flame of its love, and yet no sound is heard." This characteristic illustration differs but little from that of the Hindu spark, which falls back into the flame. For the Persian idea, like that of the Hindu, is that man without the power of choice evolves from God,

and also without power of choice returns to God. This is philosophical as well as fanciful. It teaches that the soul is a shadow which only acquires reality when it is stripped of all individuality. Thus the human soul is everything and nothing. "The world is man, and man is the world"; the godhead takes the soul into itself that it may lose itself in the godhead. All this proves that the ordinary senses do not suffice, and that intellect has to stand aside ashamed, if one is to live that soulish life which leads to God. Consciousness expands until it snaps; the light flames up so high that it goes out.

This condition is brought about by intoxication. "When the fire of the winehouse has consumed the house of intellect, then there is room in man for the godhead." "The world calls it foolishness, but he who is wise knows better. The drunkard, losing his way as he leaves the winehouse, becomes the object of mockery and derision. With every step he falls in mud and dirt. The world of fools laughs at it. Every one who has not himself tasted the wine, laughs at it. The drunken man forgets all that belongs to the world of sense, poverty and misery, sorrow and remorse." Hear what Hafiz says: "The rose has unfolded its petals, and the nightingale is in a transport of delight. Now up and rejoice, ye Sufis, if ye love wine! See how the crystal goblet



breaks the stony wall of remorse! Bring wine, for in the royal abode of contentment there is no difference between king and serf, between wise and foolish. Once we all have to leave the house which has two doors, what matter then whether the ceiling be high or low?" Therefore the Sufi spends his days in the winehouse; there he would wish to draw his last breath, there he would be buried, and blessed is he whose body helps to grow a vine, and out of whose dust a wine-jug is moulded.

And is that the whole of their religion? Oh no. Only the highest, the perfect ones attain to this. Straight and narrow is the path which leads thither. Many steps and stages and stations have to be gone through, and not all who start can keep up to the end. Once the birds desired to fly up to where their King Simurg was seated, high on the top of a mountain in the centre of the world. They all met together, and the hoopoe[1] was chosen to head the procession. Away they flew over the hills of the earth, over dales and high mountain-ridges, but by and by their numbers began to decrease, and only thirty reached the highest summit. In reward for their perseverance these thirty were made one with Simurg, for *si-murg* means thirty birds. They were merged into the infinite

[1] Bird with large crest.

compassion of the Most High, for Simurg signifies love.

Not all can keep up in the race, which is toilsome and full of privations. It needs great moral courage to rise to be a Sufi; yet the *perfected* Sufi counts moral accomplishments of little value, they are as child's play to him. In its moral precepts Sufism has something in common with Christianity. Sufism recognises the necessity of the chastisements and mortifications of the flesh which produce the ecstatic condition he desires to attain. In this respect he differs not from other fanatics, but to his honour be it said that he looks upon these extravagances as the lowest stage in his career. The finished Sufi is recognisable by his supreme morality, and this alone makes him fit for the highest place. This morality, like any other, has its precepts and its prohibitions, both, however, growing from one common root, namely, that state of passiveness which proceeds from self-effacement, or at any rate that keeping under of self which has to be cultivated if one would attain the final goal, the entire losing of self.

*Humility* is a first necessity. There is a pretty piece of poetry of Persian origin, called "The Reward of Lowliness," which tells of a drop of water falling into the ocean and finally becoming a beautiful pearl, as reward for its humility.



A drop in the ocean—a moth in the flame; the recognition of one's own insignificance, coupled with the desire for self-extinction; this pantheistic kind of humility can easily be distinguished from Christian humility with its sevenfold promise of reward. And yet how often, by a seemingly slight shifting of the premises, Christianity has mistaken the one for the other. We shall hear more of this presently.

The practical virtues which emanate from humble-mindedness: patience, contentment, liberality; and the self-evident vices: anger, envy, pride, and deceitfulness, distinguish the wise man from the fool, no matter whether he be Persian, Hindu, Chinese, Greek, or Christian. The cloak is always the same; only when asking the wise man why he wears it, the answer differs according to the standpoint which he occupies.

The wise Sufi wears it because it suits the rest of his equipment, but he wears it with a certain amount of indifference. It is not the cloak itself that matters to him. To him, as to the Hindu, all moral virtues are but the first principles. His ideal is to get beyond the touch of good and evil. Persuaded that the divine power works its will in him and guides his actions, who shall dare to condemn anything he does? He is superhuman, and has to give account to no man. "Let not the soul which burns with divine light

be judged by the standard of other men! If his speech is foul, yet do not call him a sinner. If he commits murder, yet do not draw thy sword. For his sin is above all virtues." Such is their humility!

Out of this humble-mindedness grew what they termed "non-pride." Whoso overcomes himself has also overcome his duties—that is the moral of their mysticism. He who has tasted the sweetness of ecstasy, shall he trouble himself about dry virtues? He who by inspiration has risen into oneness with the godhead, what has he to do with men? And when the cup of joy has raised him above the world, what profit is the world to him?

Such are the conclusions which have made Sufism into one of the ineffaceable powers of the earth, but which at the same time have dragged it down to the most impotent folly. It has made poets and it has made drunkards. This, in short, is its career. Any one now visiting the East, will find only the drunkard. He thrives there, for eastern despots know well how to value the power which weakens the will. In his drunkenness the Persian still mumbles the imperishable songs, and as we listen to the muttered words we realise that even in his misery he still dreams of "the Friend" and the Rose.

# V. GREEK MYSTICISM

GRECISM, what was it? "Verstand und Mass" (Reason and Moderation), said Schiller, and for a long time this was believed to be the case. Deep down into the Greek earth we had to dig, and many a learned prejudice had to be uprooted, before we began to realise that the old Greeks were made of flesh and blood, and not of marble and hexameters. Their being flesh and blood like we are has also taught us that the spiritual fermentation, which we read of as existing in ancient Greece, was not merely the discreet enthusiasm indulged in by the poets of the classical type, but that in after-Homeric times it pervaded the whole community, and developed into the same kind of ecstatic frenzy as in Eastern lands.

With quiet dignity—be it said to his eternal glory—the classical Greek kept his passions under control, gave them form and shape. Hence the "reason and moderation" theory. Yet so deeply had this fermentation entered into the Greek blood, that gradually, as self-restraint was abandoned and the classical forms fell into decay, the

tendency towards mysticism increased, and has never again relinquished its hold. Every decline in the mental state of Greece marks a step deeper down into mysticism; and from the time that Christianity became Grecianised, it sank so helplessly into mysticism, that the life of the Greek Church and the theology of the Greek Church bears henceforth the unmistakable impress of it.

And this is the more remarkable as the mystical element was not originally Greek. The Dionysian cult which introduced it cannot be explained on Greek hypotheses. Erwin Rohde, who in his *Psyche* reviews the whole process, shows how the Bacchanalian rites were introduced into Greece from the north, and started in Thrace, which is also the home of the Muses and the wild war-god Ares. Like a raging pestilence the boisterous, drunken procession swept over the land, with dancing and singing, carrying all before it, also that which resisted its progress. Foremost were the women, as is usual where anything eccentric takes place. With music of cymbals and flutes they stormed onwards. Behind the vine leaves of the Thyrsos-staff lurked the sharp-pointed lance, licking blood when their frenzy had reached its height. Ox or goat, whichever happened to be at hand,—or sometimes even a boy,—was offered as a sacrifice. In their wild fury they threw themselves at the feet of their victim, tore it to



pieces, and greedily ate the warm flesh and drank the warm blood. If the victim were a little child, he fared no better.

What mean these old rites? Were they merely the outcome of the wild dance cults, or the frenzy of drunkenness? Or was there something deeper underneath it all? There is a myth connected with the Dionysian rites which throws some light on this subject. It is the story of Zagreus, the "horned child," clearly a deity not of Greek origin, of whom it is told that he was the offspring of Zeus and his daughter Persephone, and that he was destined to inherit his father's throne and thunderbolt. Hera, however, who always kept a watchful eye on the natural children of her consort, caused an insurrection of the giants—Titans—against Zagreus. They stormed his throne, tore his body to pieces, and devoured it. Athene rescued his heart, and took it to Zeus. Zeus gave it to Semele, who now brought forth Zagreus anew, and this time he lived and came to honour under the name of Dionysius. In his anger, Zeus destroyed the Titans with his thunderbolt. Their ashes were scattered over the earth, and out of their dust men were made. And that is why we are what we are.

The problem of the double nature in man already found expression in the Creation legend of the early Babylonian epos, in which we are told

that Marduk killed Tiamat, and that divine and devils' blood was mixed with the dust of which men are made. And so it is here. Out of the ashes of the Titans we have been formed, but the divine child which they had devoured was contained in their bodies, and became dust with them. Therefore, although we are made out of devils' dust, there is divine blood also running through our veins. This constitutes a Dionysian power of which we are conscious in our best moments, and which it is our duty to foster that it may gain the mastery in us.

The wild Mænades fulfilled this duty in their crude fashion. They made either an ox or a goat into their god; probably because the earliest representation of the deity was in the form of either of these two strong-breeding animals. Sometimes they took a child,—the Zagreus child,—and pricked it on their spears, afterwards eating its flesh with cannibal appetite. When they had thus eaten they were quite sure of having the Dionysian power in them, and the oftener they partook of this Bacchanalian food the surer they were that the deity by transubstantiation would conquer in them.

This is mysticism, for it is "God in man," but it is a peculiar kind of mysticism, which brings the animal in man to the foreground. And Greece stood not alone in this respect.

Often enough in primitive religions we meet



with this "consuming of the deity." The camel sacrifices, as late as Mohammed's time, speak of it. Frantically they dance round and round the animal until they lose their senses and believe it to be their god; then they devour the victim neck and crop. This is the recipe acted upon in a multitude of wild variations.

Such customs die out in a nation when a higher moral life supplants primitive heathendom. To the elastic intellect of the Greeks, however, nothing seemed too absurd but what some ideal side might be found in it. If they were able to fashion a beautiful Aphrodite out of the loathsome, obscene goddesses dug up out of Greek soil, the Dionysian errors could surely be utilised to some good purpose.

The underlying thought in the doctrine of the Titanic descent of man is *pessimism*. Now it is not at all in accordance with the primitive nature of the Greeks to take a gloomy view of things. The sad or tragic utterances we occasionally meet with in Homer's works are rather an expression of regret that the glorious life of man is so short, and Solon boldly prays the gods to grant him not sixty, but eighty years of life. But by degrees, as their spirits became depressed, even the Hellenes began to hang their heads.

Of Pythagoras it was said among the Greeks—feeling there was something strange about his way of thinking—that he had derived his wisdom from

foreign lands. He preached as early as the middle of the sixth century a doctrine of life based on very gloomy considerations, and which in outward form at any rate was often not unlike the Dionysian or—as it is better known—the Orphean belief.

Just as Zagreus was born again as Dionysius, so, according to Pythagoras, are we created in order to be born again, and the wheel of births for the transmigration of souls is thus kept in perpetual motion. Again, as in Orphism it says that we are composed of the conflicting Titanic and Dionysian elements which are always at war within us, so Pythagoras declares that the soul is united with and buried in the body as a punishment ; that the body is a prison-house into which the soul has been cast because of its sins, and not until the soul has freed itself from this outer covering can God lead it up into the spiritual life of a higher world. The same thing is taught a century later by Empedocles : the soul is joined to the body to expiate former shortcomings, and after death is either raised into a higher sphere, or is thrown into the hell of Tartarus, or, as a third alternative, is doomed to be reincarcerated and to wander through various animal and human forms. For the soul's original home is with God, where it existed in primitive bliss, from whence, through sin, it has fallen to earth, and to which height it must work itself up again.

Two means are provided to assist the soul in this



struggle. The one is sacramental *consecration*, which consists in being admitted into the circle of philosophy, or faith ; the other is *purification* (*katharsis*), to which the devout person must submit, and which even in the days of Pythagoras included asceticism.

In all these matters the thoughts of the philosophers correspond with the vagrant teachings of Orphism. Only on one point the philosopher carefully guards himself. He refrains from saying that the human soul is divine, which the followers of Dionysius boldly declared to be the case. According to them, the souls were "*entheoi*" ; they contained the divine, had exchanged souls with the Godhead ; or further still : the human soul was originally a "*daimon*," a being of divine nature. Not only in the invisible choir of spirits had it roamed, but the unborn souls wander visibly upon the earth—and the ultimate end is salvation, reunion with the Godhead.

So far the philosophers do not stretch the point. Their " ultimate end," in olden times, was always restricted within certain limitations. One cannot become divine, they argued, but one can try to become like the divinity. They hesitate to make the great leap which would land them into pure mysticism, but they would like to, if they dared ; therefore they push their superlative as near to the borderland as they can.

Even Plato could not entirely free himself from the deep-rooted influence of Dionysianism. His celestial idealism is, as a matter of fact, Orphism, but in such high potency that it is difficult to reduce it again to its simple, original form. Whether we may call this high idealism of Plato mysticism, is open to doubt. Fortunately there are things in this world of such magnitude that they defy any made-up system. Yet, when Plato draws near to the fulfilment of his highest ideal, there certainly is a trait of mysticism in him, which comes strikingly near to the notions then prevailing in the East. Perhaps it is the Arian blood in them which causes all these great thinkers to think alike on these sublimest matters, or perhaps it is an inner logic leading all noble natures ultimately into the one path, which has its starting-point in mysticism.

Plato, however, as a disciple of Socrates, should not have been the man to bring mysticism to honour in Greek philosophy. For if any man ever fully realised how limited a creature man is, and of how little avail it is to attempt to break through these limitations, that man surely was Socrates. Purely Greek is the thought which meets us over and over again in the myths of ancient Greece—that an insuperable gulf separates men from the gods, and that the destiny of mortals is quite distinct from the blissful existence of the gods. The old Greek moral was: Wilt thou be happy,



remember thy finiteness. If in thy pride thou shouldst be tempted to aspire to more than belongs to thy finite state, the "envy of the gods" will soon teach thee what thy proper place is.

Thus *moderation* became the Greek's chief virtue; that wise self-control which ennobled their art and stamped their culture as classical, in contradistinction to what is known as primitive, and expresses itself in ungoverned lusts and appetites.

Socrates brought this philosophical self-control to perfection by carrying it into the sphere of contemplation, and by teaching mankind to respect the boundary line of human knowledge. Humility of mind was introduced by Socrates, even as humility of heart was preached by Christ. But the Socratic "know thyself" contained more than a warning to respect the limitations set to human intellect. It contained a promise also, that he who kept within the bounds of true humanity would find in it a wealth of power and strength, amply compensating him for not sharing the blissful existence of the gods, namely, the light of conscience and the sacred calling to do right.

Greek realism and Greek idealism thus clearly set forth the conception of man as an individual personality, both in regard to his insignificance and his dignity; but Socrates never attempted to seek any glory for man beyond his individuality and his moral responsibility.

As the disciple of Socrates, Plato should have kept a sober guard over this boundary line. It is, however, with a suspicion of irony that he carries the great virtue of moderation to the extreme, when in his dialogue *Phædrus* (p. 244) he lets Socrates as an ironical representative of this view—point out to a young man, that also in love a certain degree of moderation should be observed, and that we should never be carried away by it. For then it would deteriorate into madness, into what the Greeks called *mania*, which is despicable. This principle is then worked out to an absurdity,by concluding that : if I have the choice of loving any one who loves me or another who does not love me, it is advisable to prefer the one who does not love me, because the impassioned has lost control over himself.

At this point, however, Plato suddenly swerves round, and—like the poet Stesichorus, who first composed an ode against Helena and then recalled it—he now declared that there was one kind of mania which is grand and praiseworthy, and emanated from the gods. He even adds that the best things come to us while we are in this trance, which comes over us as a divine gift. For the prophetess of Delphi and the priestess of Dodone —when in a trance—have done much both for the good of individuals and for the public welfare, but little or nothing when in possession of their five



senses. To speak of the Sibyls and others who through *mantik* or possession (*entheoi*) have done good service to many by predicting the future—were but waste of time and a useless enumeration of facts known to all. One thing, however, is well worth recalling, namely, that the ancients who in ages past formed the words of speech, did not look upon mania as a thing to despise or to be ashamed of, for in that case they would not have called the art of divination " mantik," which word, according to Plato, is derived from mania. It proves that the name-givers regarded *mania* as a good thing when it emanated from the gods. And Plato, while objecting to mantik as the human art of soothsaying, agrees with the ancients " that divinely inspired mania is vastly superior to human self-control."

Plato *could* speak so because, besides what he had learned from Socrates, he had also studied Orphism ; he *had* to speak so because in him was an inner longing for the highest, a longing which could not be satisfied with the empiric limitations of humanity. Therefore, when he talks without restraint, without philosophically weighing every word, but out of the fulness of his heart, he says : " the soul is immortal," and then he dilates upon the soul as being for the greater part heaven-born and divinely fed, and this accounts for what there is beautiful and good

and true in human nature. But there is always the dual tendency, the striving upwards to the gods, and the pulling downwards to the earth. " Nourish thy soul with the strength of wisdom, of beauty, and of goodness," says Plato, " that thou mayest find the way to the celestial heights, for there alone the soul shall find rest." If the soul is immortal, then it is divine. To the Greek mind these two words mean the same. Once it abode with the gods in perfect purity. Having tasted of purity it always longs for it. And if on earth our soul beholds beauty, or comes in contact with goodness or wisdom, we are seized with a longing after what once was ours, what we now only vaguely remember as a dream of long ago.

This is Platonic love. The highest expression of love is love for the highest ; a longing for what is eternal and perfect.

At Plato's *Symposion* all speak of love ; but love as conceived by Socrates is not satisfied with earthly love. That is only the first stage. We love an individual being, and good thoughts arise in us because of this love, until, taught by love, we discern beauty and goodness in all things and all beings. Then we go a step farther in the apprehension of the beautiful, until we learn to esteem the beauty of the soul above that of the body. Again love leads us on to a higher stage,



and we learn to appreciate the beauty of human intercourse, and the beauty of wisdom fills us with enthusiasm. Larger and wider becomes our horizon ; more and more we learn in the school of love. We understand what are the great connecting links of life, and unlearn slavishly to limit ourselves to the bidding of one human being. We set out on the vast ocean of love, and in the contemplation of its loveliness beautiful and precious thoughts are born in us, thoughts of wisdom and purity, and we become strong and mighty in realising that there is only one knowledge worth knowing in this world, and that is the knowledge of the beautiful.

When we have been led thus far into the realms of love and approach its consummation, we suddenly become aware of a something which is inexpressibly beautiful, the contemplation of which compensates us for all the trouble we have taken. This vision of beauty is infinite and imperishable ; it neither increases nor decreases ; its beauty is always the same ; it has neither countenance nor hands nor form ; neither thought nor speech ; it is not bound to any place ; it belongs not to any living being in heaven or earth ; it is self-existing, eternally the same.

Hast thou once beheld that vision, then thou wilt no longer crave for gold and raiment, and the pleasures of youth which now enthral thee

until thou forgettest to eat and to drink. He who has seen it, in its unalloyed purity and beauty, not in flesh and blood or other vain disguise, but in the excellence of the divine unity, thinkest thou that he can lead an evil life ?

Thus the philosopher catches the bird which the mystic has allowed to escape. The love of youth is declared to be the mysterious yearning of the soul after its divine origin and its former blessed existence; and in that condition of enthusiastic ecstasy, it is possible for man to think himself into the transcendent realms of love, step by step encompassing higher and more superlative perfections: the state, knowledge, God.

In so far as this thinking of oneself into ever higher regions resembles the gradual stages of mysticism, in so far Plato was a mystic. But mysticism has for its object the attainment of the intensest form of *unconsciousness*, while Plato aspires at the highest form of *consciousness*. Both conditions imply the being carried away in mind beyond the reach of material surroundings, but Plato nowhere claims the loss of self-control as a necessary element.

Plato never denies that man stands before an inexpressible inconceivable problem, if he would behold the invisible. "It is hard," he says, in one of his later writings, "to apprehend the All-Father, and when apprehended, it is impossible to interpret Him." But this does not imply that logic is done away with. Plato is saved from sinking into mysticism not only by his philosophical power of consciousness, but also by his unwavering belief in the indissoluble personality of the human *ego*. This conviction he expounds in a variety of ways, and he holds to it so firmly that even where he admits of *mania* he never concedes to the doctrine of the dissolution of the soul, an error into which the true mystic inevitably falls. At the same time, in his belief that every soul is a separate "daimon," he betrays himself as an adept student of Orphism.



And in conclusion, we must allude to Plato's idea of that form of self-effacement which is a part of all genuine mysticism, and is based on the passing away of consciousness. We refer to *asceticism*. Plato deals with this as he does with ecstasy. He makes use of its good properties, but the dross he throws away. He accepts the necessity of purification, *katharsis*, for the cultivation of good thoughts; and he acknowledges that the flesh must be overcome; but he is a Greek, he loves beauty. The beauty of form and the beauty of life must not suffer through our longing for the delights of heaven. On the contrary, our zeal, instead of consuming us, should rather nourish us, make us strong, and in the same measure as it

brings us nearer to human excellence it should bring us nearer to divine perfection.

In Plato, mysticism has found its match, a thinker initiated in all the intricacies of mysticism, a man who appropriates its wealth, but not at the cost of his own individuality ; who rather uses its power for the good of the soul. Plato puts the mysticism of personality in the place of natural mysticism—therein lies the difference between West and East. He demands moral endeavour, where the other exacts self-effacement.

Yet—we shall see how there is but one step between Platonism and the ecstatic intuition of mysticism ; a step which Plato knew how to avoid, but which his followers took unwittingly, and thus easily glided into mysticism. The confusion thereby caused in Platonic doctrines found expression in the philosophic sect of the Neo-Platonists.

In considering the importance of Platonic philosophy, we must bear in mind what it brought forth, to what varying philosophical and religious transformations it gave rise, and what was their influence, not only on the philosophers of the time, but also on the thinking portion of the populace. And again, in trying to measure Plato's strength of mind, we have to consider to what a very small extent his many disciples were capable of following him in his exalted flights of thought. Strong in



the power of his own personality and his firm belief in the rights of humanity, Plato was able to combine into one grand unity all the various elements of his philosophy, its logical, physical, and moral principles, and even the things which he derived from the popular religion and its myths.

He managed to keep all these things well balanced, because he kept each one within its proper sphere, and gave it the room for action which it deserved. The Neo-Platonists, however, wanted to improve on his structure, extend the horizon still farther, introduce still more vagaries into his system of philosophy, be more logical and more popular than Plato was, ascend still higher and descend still lower than he. In this endeavour they not only broke through the boundaries of true Platonism, but they lost sight of its centre of activity. *Personality* lost its power the farther these adventurers advanced in their philosophical speculations. For personality could not breathe in the height to which they carried it, and it sank into the inertness of demon worship, to which at last they had to take refuge in order to extricate themselves from their difficulties.

This is exemplified even in the noblest of them all, in *Plotinus* (d. 276 A.D.), the finest figure among the philosophers of the time of the Empire, and Plato's most conscientious follower. And because

he was one of the few of the Neo-Platonic school who always aimed at the highest and despised all that was base, we see in him most clearly how the next step of Platonism had to lead into mysticism.

The God of Plato was not good enough for Plotinus, not spiritual enough because not transcendental enough. This supreme Unity, which is above all and in all, must be so highly exalted above all intelligence that it can think no thoughts. Plato said: "It is hard to apprehend the All-Father, and when apprehended it is impossible to interpret Him"; but Plotinus is not satisfied with this. He says it is impossible to apprehend the Deity; He is beyond all understanding. One cannot say that He is a thinking being; He is thought itself. That which can be thought or that which can think is a composite being, it must have parts. But God has no parts, neither quantity nor quality, it is one indivisible Unity. Therefore away with Plato's definition of God as "Highest Intelligence."

Nor is He to be described as the "Supreme Goodness," for in goodness there is motion and want—therefore division. One cannot say of this absolute Unity that it has being or existence, for all that exists has numerical quantity. With such and similar mathematical and dialectical sophisms Plotinus places his God beyond the reach of con-



ception, and this had a harmful effect on Christian theology. Platonism in this highest potency was attractive to the mind as something exquisitely sublime, and henceforth no theology was thought complete unless it had some of this delectable fare to offer.

Plato's conception of the Deity, however, was not ignored, it merely had another place assigned to it. Plotinus called it *nus*, or "Pure Intelligence," and he attributed to this conception the qualities which he denied to the Highest, namely, being and action, thought and goodness. It became the actual and practical God of mankind, unless man had sunk so low that he had to be content with the worship of the demons of the popular belief, and get on as best he could with their assistance.

For the world is a kind of pyramid. At the top is the inconceivable Unity, from which all existence emanates in ever-increasing multiplicity, but in steadily decreasing value and reality. The fundamental idea in Platonism is that highest spirituality is truest reality. The lower we come down to what we are accustomed to call the realities of life, the less reality and the more delusion and vanity we find. If man would rise above the illusions of multiplicity, one way only is open to him. He must fix his thoughts on the supreme and only true reality, and in

purity of life and piety of soul, by constant meditation upon the origin of all purity and goodness, enter into the unity and peace of God.

This is the path of philosophy, and it leads very near to the goal. For the goal of philosophy is to obtain salvation by contemplation. Plotinus explains in even clearer terms than Plato how and why man must work out his salvation by contemplation.

The *nus* which we have to rise up to is intelligence itself, the highest intelligence, and our intellect, the human *nus*, must endeavour to comprehend and to share this. In what measure we comprehend the Divine Intelligence, in that measure we absorb it into our being and are made partakers of its supreme qualities. Our own intelligence becomes spiritualised, merged into pure thought and pure goodness.

Yet this does not fully satisfy Plotinus. With the Highest, the supreme Source of all things, he desires fellowship. To the height of the supreme Unity he would rise and be completely freed from the confusion of multiplicity. Now, as this supreme Unity is exalted far above all thought, it is vain to attempt to reach up to it by our apprehension. Philosophy fails us at this point—or, more correctly, it can help us only to climb up to the highest rung of the ladder, where intelligence stops, and the sacred unconsciousness



begins in which multiplicity and diversity of thought ends, and we become united with the Unity.

In other words: we end in *ecstasy*, and this is what the entire system of Plotinus led up to. Plato's God did not suffice, because Plato kept his five senses together and endeavoured to teach the people to do the same. But there is a craving for mysticism in human nature, and a supreme, mystical Deity had to be conceived. Metaphysics and logic had to give way before the longing of the soul, and finely spun consequences were drawn out and built up to justify the claims of an inrooted passion. For there can be no doubt about it that the condition aimed at by Plotinus was mystical ecstasy. It possessed all the unmistakable signs of it. It was the direct, unmediated consciousness, as if by personal contact of the presence of the Highest. Suddenly the soul is suffused with light, which flows from God. It does not impart any knowledge about God; one realises *that* He is, but not *what* He is. It is a state of being outside of self, God-inspired, capable of apprehending the workings of the divine spirit in the soul, but it does not enable one to describe what He is. When God thus suddenly reveals Himself to the soul, separateness exists no longer, there is no more duality, but only one, inseparable unity. The soul

becomes one with itself and one with God. One cannot now say that the soul apprehends God, but rather that it becomes God. The soul is now pure light, free from all earthly trammels, it apprehends itself as God.[1]

Plotinus teaches that the road which leads to this condition consists in purification, moral abstinence, utter indifference to earthly things, strict self-examination. One cannot pursue this ecstatic condition; it overtakes one suddenly, silently, in overpowering grace, as a reward for trustful waiting and watching. *Amelios*, one of the disciples of Plotinus, tells us in his diary what the soul experiences at such times. "Like a dream which trembles and dies away, at the approach of dawn, so all the past and the present vanish. Former consciousness passes away, and a new consciousness awakens. I feel weak and empty as one just recovering from an illness and finds his memory gone. My travels, my studies, my plans and ambitions, all are as nought. All strength has been taken from me like a garment, and I feel thrown back again to the first beginnings."

In such open epilepsy Platonism results at last. Greek mysticism has run its course. It has ended as it began, in convulsions. In the course of its career, however, it has been systematised by men

[1] Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 2nd ed. iii. 2. 551.



of noble intellect. Like an overwhelming power forcing the human mind in one same direction, we notice with surprise that this Greek system of philosophy geometrically agrees with the thought-structure of Hindu mysticism. The same problems and the same results; the same extravagant, speculative conceptions: apprehending the incomprehensible; essential similarity between the divine and the human spirit; and finally, the consummation of bliss in the union of these two beyond the portals of consciousness.

For a long time the Greek continued to show himself in his demeanour a son of Hellenic culture. Asceticism never had quite so strong a hold on him as on the Hindu. He took care of his body, and only prepared himself for his high aspirations by abstaining from vulgar lusts and sensualities. But this last link with ancient culture gradually loosened also.

*Porphyrius* and *Iamblicus*, the former a disciple of Plotinus, the latter a forerunner of Syrian piety, declare war to the body and teach salvation through a system of self-renunciation and mantik in which the customs and usages of the East occupy so large a place, that in the teachings of these sectarian leaders one can hardly find any trace of the old Greek spirit.

# VI. NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY AND MYSTICISM

WHILE Greek mysticism was thus growing rank and wild, a refining factor was at work, fostering that inner life which could scarcely breathe in the atmosphere of heathen mysticism. Christianity had undertaken this task, not only with fresh youthful vigour, but under quite new and intimate conditions, and instituted a new kind of piety and a new form of culture.

When Christianity was sufficiently crystallised to be made into a doctrine, many were surprised to find how much in it resembled the noblest thoughts of heathenism. It was whispered among the crowds opposed to Christianity that it was merely an adaptation of Plato's views, and that even Christian teachers tried to give weight to their assertions by pointing out similarities between their teachings and the tenets of the great sage.

In our days one is not so easily taken in by these apparent agreements; on the contrary, we are keenly alive to the fact that the chief characteristics of Platonism and of Christianity are very





widely apart. Yet there is a region in which the two meet as on common ground. For, in the first place, among all who seek the highest, there exists of necessity a certain bond of fellowship; and, in the second place, Christianity, by its conscious and deliberate breach with the narrow-mindedness of latter-day Judaism, and by boldly proclaiming the rights of mankind, appears in many points to agree with the doctrines of the "humanities," which were the expression of the noblest thoughts of decaying antiquity. Moreover, philosophy and Christianity were at one in their desire to elevate the people and their worship above the existing polytheism and all the evils incumbent upon it. But there was a marked difference between the two methods employed. What philosophical heathenism only whispered in the ears of the initiated, Christianity proclaimed from the housetops. The message which Christianity brought was not a Freemason secret, nor a philosophical mystery, it was a matter of vital moment for all, a matter of salvation which concerned all mankind.

Underlying Platonic mysticism there existed something which flavoured of evangelical truth. With the Gospel this something came to light; not as a reflected thought, but as a living reality. Plato had grasped something of the eternal responsibility of the human soul and of eternal justice. These truths—gradually lost sight of

among the followers of Plato—came to light again with Christianity, and this time they would not be forgotten. They became the dominating power of Christian life; the individuality of man was a foregone conclusion, for had not this truth been melted and moulded in the forge of Judaism?

To the Jews, strong in the consciousness of their national exclusiveness, individuality, although recognised, was of secondary importance. They had to be schooled into the full realisation that every man is personally responsible before God. They could not fail to understand this sooner or later, because with unwavering persistence they always thought of their God as a person. They never made a graven image of Him, but in thought they pictured Him in human form, with such intensity, that when the prophets had elevated their thoughts above this human conception of the Deity, His Personality remained irrevocably fixed in their minds. The Jews had no temptation to fall either into pantheism or mysticism. The children of Israel have ever been practical, energetic, calculating; sober-minded rather than fantastical. The Jew believes in realities, God's guidance of his fathers, God's guidance of himself. All the fundamental ideas of his religion are practical and real: authority, justice, retribution. How sober are the arguments of Job's friends, those spokesmen



of traditional Judaism. And Job himself, disputing with them from the experience of suffering, never for a moment loses his self-control.

"God is in heaven and I am on the earth," marks the distance between God and man for the devout Jew. No one can see God and live, is the basis of genuine Judaism. The prophets may have their ecstasies, their trances, their high intuitions, but never do they merge into the Godhead nor the Godhead into them. Schools of prophets may go through the land dancing and singing, but it is never a Dionysian procession. They neither eat their God nor become gods.

The culminating point in the experience of the believing Jew is the *passion of faith*. The will becomes tenacious and strenuous, and this activity of the will enhances the feeling of personal responsibility, and gives to their faith and to the God in whom they believe that harshness and relentlessness which characterises and disfigures later Judaism. Gradually, as the Jews became imbued with Greek culture, they also became tainted with mysticism, but this mysticism shows to a far greater extent the influence of the intellectual life of the Hellenes than of the religious life of the Jews.

*Jesus* steps forth from a background not of mysticism, but of personal faith; nay more—

judging by the Pharisees of His day—from a background of clearly defined religious individualism. And what Jesus brings is not mysticism, but a personal faith, only it is of a higher nature than the faith thus far held, it is not bound by law or nationality; it is freed from egotism, superficiality, and sterility; it is spiritualised, intensified, humanised.

There is nothing either in the mind of Jesus or in His zeal that can properly be called mysticism. Often enough mystics have desired to stamp Him as one of theirs. In His daily life they have tried to find the unmistakable signs of mysticism. Like the mystic He has His moments of spiritual contemplation, a craving for solitude. He flees from the multitude, goes into the wilderness to fast, into the mountains to pray. He knows no bodily wants when His mind is occupied; He is "troubled in spirit" when He speaks with force and decision.

Was Jesus an ecstatic? asks a modern German theologian,[1] and with much trouble he collects evidence which will enable him to answer in the affirmative.

In a French criticism on this book of Holtzmann's the correctness of this view is queried. In the

[1] O. Holtzmann, *War Jesus Ekstatiker?* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1903.) Reviewed by A. Loisy in the *Revue Critique*, 1903, No. 23.



Jesus of the Bible, or at any rate of the first three Gospels, there is nothing which warrants it. We find therein nothing pathological, nothing ecstatic in the true sense of the word; nothing of that clouding over or upsetting of the human will. But we do find that exquisitely exalted condition of soul with which all creative geniuses and more especially religious enthusiasts are acquainted.

In the conduct and the teaching of Jesus traces of mysticism are also declared to exist. For Him blessedness is to be found in the inner life, and He has little to say of things outward; He is silent about culture; He wages war against outward ceremonies and external piety, against traditional obligations and authorities. In all this He is like the mystic. The lowly and the poor in spirit He calls blessed to the detriment of the rich. The things that are hidden from the wise are revealed unto babes. Quiet hearkening is nearer to heaven than much serving. Piety is to be measured by its intensity, not by its works. And then He utters those words which find an echo in the mystic's mind: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." . . . "The kingdom of God is within you." . . . "Whosoever seeks to save his life shall lose it." The whole Sermon on the Mount, in fact, is as a piece out of the programme of the mystic.

All this may sound like mysticism; and had Christ said nothing beyond this, we should have to assign Him a place among the mystics. But He has said a great deal more and done a great deal more, which is entirely outside the scope of mysticism. Because two circles cross each other, it does not necessarily follow that they merge into one another. Doubtless there is a region in which Gospel and mysticism meet. The strikingly evangelical note in the works of Laotze, of the Persian sages, of Plato, are sufficient proof of this. But the question is: What is peculiarly characteristic in each one of them, what are their distinctive properties, and wherein they fall short? What, in fact, are their pretensions outside the pale of this common ground?

Christianity has much to offer in this respect. Its Gospel is a life of *love*; not a life of rapturous emotion, as in mystic circles; still less does it speak of the characteristic mystical aversion to society. No, our life must be one of active, untiring charity, of brotherly love, and constant intercourse with our fellow-men, under all the usual conditions of everyday life. It speaks also of *sin* and of *grace*, of a warfare with the Evil One as with a personal enemy. Evil is a power outside of us, attacking us and compelling us to fight or to yield. It is not the lower nature in man which can be conquered by the subjugation



of one's human nature. Sin is not synonymous with "the flesh," is not the blind, natural tendency of sensual man; it is a conscious violation of the explicit commandments of God, or a turning away from His redeeming grace. Redemption is not a raising of self on to a higher plane, or into a higher condition, but it is the forgiveness of sin, a free, personal act of grace of the Judge of all men. And then it speaks of *faith*, the divine will-power, with its boldness, its confidence, and its pride; faith in the kingdom of God and in the will of God; the faith of a little child in the Father's love. *Children of God*, that is the only relationship towards God which is recognised in the Gospel. "The same Spirit bears witness with our spirit"—not that we are God, but—"that we are the children of God."

All this is personal, intimate; it breathes freedom; it is conscious discrimination, and therefore not mysticism. The responsibilities and natural conditions of life are not lost in rapture or speculation. They remain in evidence. *The difference between good and evil, between God and man, between spirit and nature, remains unalterably fixed.* The Gospel does not seek to level these differences, but to annul their possible consequences, by establishing a relationship; that is, a fellowship of goodness, a fellowship with God; *fellowship*; not *union*; therein lies the essential difference

between Christianity and mysticism. Fellowship is not merely an internal act; it also takes account of the outer world, with all our visible and tangible surroundings. Fellowship is a matter of *will*; it cannot be built on a foundation of feeling alone, and still less on meditation. Fellowship demands faith: faith in men, faith in what is good, confidence in God. It lies in the nature of mysticism that there should not be room either for the outer world, or for the will, or for faith. And it lies in the nature of Christianity that there should be no room for the true characteristics of mysticism. The clover leaf, *ecstacy, asceticism, intuition,* cannot grow in Christian soil. For these three factors imply an ultimate union with God which can only be attained by abstract thought, and generally at the cost of one's human nature. Although a grand mysticism, such as that of Plato, falls short of committing this latter mistake, and advocates the ennobling of human nature instead of ignoring it, yet the fundamental difference between Platonism and Christianity remains the same, for the Platonist *thinks out* his salvation, but the Christian is saved by *faith.* And this is not only Platonic as opposed to Christian, it is Greek as opposed to Jewish, Arian as opposed to Semitic.

Moments of racial and cultural conflict necessarily arose frequently after Christianity made



its entrance into Europe, but gradually the new religion gained the mastery over the inrooted notions of heathendom. In these conflicts mysticism always played a part, and showed in a peculiar manner, either when Christianity was losing its hold, or when it had gained a firmer footing again.

As long as the Christian Church abode in its apostolic strength, personal faith was the highest form of life, and the only expression of the relationship towards God. There was no room for real mysticism. Yet symptoms of its future power began to appear, and became especially perceptible when Christianity had taken root in Greek soil. *Ecstasy* was the first malady which attacked the Church,—as seen in the Church at Corinth. Speaking in tongues and prophesying were the sure symptoms of a darkening of the understanding, but they were religiously effective, and highly esteemed among the believers.

Paul stands up manfully against this departure from their first love. He realises what he has to fight against. Paul, the man of faith, had been tried in the furnace of faith. He had tasted of rapture, he had felt the exalting influence of ecstatic delight, but he had risen above it. What happened to him on the way to Damascus is not without its counterpart in other ecstatic conversions, which in point of time are nearer to us.

The modern Jew, Ratisbonne,—if we may credit his words,—was, after long resistance, by special revelation, suddenly converted to Roman Catholicism; and he describes exactly the same experiences as befel Paul, including the blindness. Yet—let us bear in mind that Saul did not become Paul because of the revelations he received, but because of what those revelations contained.

One undoubtedly ecstatic experience Paul relates in 2 Cor. xii. It has all the symptoms of mystical rapture. He speaks of himself in the third person; he cannot tell whether he is in the body or out of the body; he feels himself caught up into a higher sphere; he hears unspeakable words which no man can utter. But—what Christian strength he brings back from this experience! In the same breath, as it were, come the words: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Incomprehensible as they may sound to those who have not themselves had Christian experiences, they put the seal to all his preaching about the unprofitableness of boasting, and explain why he made it his special mission to proclaim this truth.

And now his advice to the Church at Corinth: Boast not of ecstasy! I can speak both in prophecy and in tongues, but of what profit are these things compared with the power and the inexhaustible riches of a life of charity? Therein



is truth, therein is health, therein is what is greater than both faith and hope, and whatever other virtue Christianity can bestow on us. And in the light of this assurance, the sayings and teachings of Paul, which often sound mystical, are not real mysticism.

"The deep things of God" into which the Spirit searcheth; "our life which is hid in God"; "what no eye hath seen and no ear heard, neither hath entered into any man's mind"; nature groaning for redemption, and the Spirit making intercession for us "with groanings which cannot be uttered."

These and many other of Paul's sayings reveal touches of mysticism, and show decided mystical fermentation. Christianity has succeeded in leading him thus far away from the dryness of Rabbinism, but he never lets go his common sense. He would rather speak than groan; he wants to search out the hidden things; he is not drowned in the deep things of God, nor does he mix up his own redemption with the redemption of nature. He never loses sight of the personal either in God or in himself. His is merely a richly gifted nature, capable of realising that there are depths which human understanding cannot fathom.

There is one expression of Paul's, however, which seems to imply actual mysticism, at any rate it became the keynote of the mysticism

soon after springing up in the Greek Church. I refer to those enthusiastic words in the Epistle to the Galatians: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); and he declares in the same Epistle (i. 16) that it pleased God "to reveal His Son in me." In our day these words convey the idea of an ardent desire, an earnest resolve to make Christ the basis of our lives. But this is a modern interpretation; Paul surely meant something much more realistic. In this Epistle he compares his own experiences of Christ with the companionship the other apostles had with the "Master," and he attributes the same reality, or at all events the same authority, to his personal revelations as to their historical intercourse with Christ. And when he tells the converts that Christ lives in him, this should also be taken as a real thing. Something in Paul's psychology betrays his conviction that what takes place in the heart of the believer is not merely a psychical emotion or experience, but that it is an actual spiritual growth; he holds that man can receive a new soul, and on this ground he considers it no psychological impossibility that Christ should dwell in man. But another question is—and this we cannot answer—how far Paul thought this indwelling of Christ could extend.

We are sure, however, that Paul, in the transport of his assurance of faith, came perilously near to



the borders of mysticism, and, as was the case with Plato, one step farther would have landed him into the forbidden region. The Greek Church took this fatal step, and drifted ever farther away on the dangerous path.

In another direction also the way for mysticism was being prepared in the apostolic Church. In the Gospel of John we find no violent emotion, no psychological losing of self in ecstasy, but a sublime depth of meditation on the Person of the Godhead, and His revelations to men; on the incarnate Son of God, and on the divine element in man. In all this the evangelist appears to have a leaning towards Hellenic mysticism. "To know God" is the first and chief stipulation. Practical "faith" is raised on to a higher platform as personal knowledge, or, at the least, an inner perception. God is defined as a Spirit who has to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." And finally God-incarnate declares Himself in the words: "I and the Father are one." These words of John reverberate through all the phases of Christian mysticism, together with those of Paul, "Christ lives in me." The theoretical condition of existence is taken from John, the practical condition of life from Paul.

The unity here expressed does not refer only to the oneness of the incarnate Word with the Father; it also expresses the fellowship of the

faithful with the Son of God : " That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us—I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." *Unio mystica* was the name given by the early Church to this union of love as declared by John. And no purer symbol of this mystical union can be conceived than the Parable of the Vine. " I am the vine, ye are the branches. Abide in Me, and I in you ; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."

In this train of thought great weight is necessarily attached to the *Incarnation*, to the fact that the Divine Majesty assumed human form, that " the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." While Paul pleads Christ's death as the one superlative event, John dwells on His birth, His leaving the everlasting glory which He had with the Father, to become man ; a sure guarantee for the purpose He came to accomplish and the truth of His teachings. John's picture of Christ sets forth the union of the divine and the human, it is the link which unites God and man : " Thou in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us."

In order to give a Greek stamp to his meditations, he introduces the word " logos " in the prologue to his Gospel, and there *only*. Logos—in



our Bible translated by " Word " — was the expression used in the Jewish Greek Church to define the Godhead which has become flesh. And here we stand face to face with the semi-Platonic reflection that it is not God Himself who becomes man, but a consubstantial being, a Mediator through whom the desired union is accomplished. In saying this, however, we do not wish to imply that the prologue to the Gospel of John can be brought under the rubric of one or other of the Platonic schools.

It would seem unavoidable to see in this Fourth Gospel a strong tendency towards Hellenic mysticism. " Knowledge," " oneness," " spirit," " truth," the ever-recurring words in Greek devotion, have here been substituted for the sober Christian expressions : faith, fellowship, personality, conviction. Yes, this might be said, and many have said it, and for the sake of argument it has its worth, but in reality it is mistaking the clothes for the man. With a little deeper insight into mysticism, we easily discover that the mysticism of this book lies in the *expression* of it, but not in the *sense*. For instance, when, in chapter iv. 24, God is declared to be a Spirit, this is merely in elucidation of His personality, for in the immediately preceding verse He is called " Father," and by this name He is known throughout the Gospel, while the definition "Spirit"

occurs only seldom. Nor is there any reason why the "oneness" spoken of should be taken in the literal, mystical sense of the word. John nowhere asserts in his Gospel that the believer must be swallowed up in God, or that God should be absorbed in him. The Parable of the Vine conveys the idea of intimacy, fellowship, not identity. This *unio mystica* does not destroy human nature, but elevates it; it is nowhere written that it should be at the cost of consciousness or sound common sense.

And the same with the "*to know*" of John's Gospel. Inge strikingly remarks that in this Gospel only the *verb* "to know" is used, but not the noun *gnosis*, which latter at once leads us into a sphere of Grecism. This "to know" of the Gospel is on a level with the word "to believe"; they are words of equal value in their adaptation to our intercourse with God. It would be mysticism if faith were regarded as a step towards knowledge, and knowledge again leading a step nearer to God, but only coming into effect beyond the border-line of human consciousness.

In conclusion, the *incarnation* would be mysticism if the Gospel did not persistently uphold its historical character. Yet we are not to suppose that it is merely symbolical or semi-real, as the disclaimers of John would have us to believe. No, "we have seen, we have touched"; real



blood and water flowed out of His side. Notwithstanding the mystical glamour which prevails in this Fourth Gospel, there is a conscious and intentional bringing into prominence of the historical and real personality of Christ, which keeps it totally free from ordinary mysticism. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the mysticism which soon sprang up and flourished in the Eastern Church, was chiefly based—and with a certain amount of right—upon this Gospel. The speculative ring of the prologue and the wording of the Gospel itself sufficiently account for the wide use made of it in the fanciful theological mysticism of the day, when a far deeper meaning was put into the formula, "I and the Father," than John would ever have sanctioned.

Through the abortive use of the Gospel words, many heathen notions were rehabilitated with an assumption of Christianity; but in spite of this misuse it was of incalculable importance for the growth of the early Christian Church, that by means of it a link was formed with the Greek world in which Christianity was slowly making its way. The mystical language spoken in the Church was familiar to the learned scholars of the land, and thus the union between young Christianity and staid Greek culture could be accomplished.

# VII. THE MYSTICISM OF THE GREEK CHURCH

THE transition from apostolic piety to theological mysticism was foreshadowed even in Christ's lifetime by the teachings of some learned Jews in Alexandria, who endeavoured to reconcile Eastern notions and Western thought, probably primarily with the idea of establishing the right of existence of Judaism in the Capital of Hellenic culture. There, in modest retirement, lived the Jew Philo, a musing scribe, to whom occasional flashes of genius cannot be denied, but who possessed no real literary talent, was superstitious and dilettantish. Yet he was the man first to put into words what, for centuries to come, was to form the bulwark of the Neo-Platonic school. With Moses in the one hand and Plato in the other, he tried to make a bargain between the two by deducing Platonic teaching from the writings of Moses, and by converting law and revelation into philosophy and science. He did so by speculation, and his speculation was mysticism. Not that he betrayed the God of his fathers; on the





contrary, God was very real to him, as the God revealed by Moses. Yet, to comprehend Him, or explain Him, he resorted to Platonism. God is that which abides for ever, the inexpressible, the unapproachable: "Thou shalt see My back parts, but My face shall not be seen." Only in silent contemplation can God be apprehended, for we know of nothing whereby to compare Him. If we are to know Him He must be within us. He breathed the breath of life into us, and with it something of His own nature, and He is the earnest of the highest in us. The inspired person, in whom God has verily breathed of His breath, can, with full confidence, say that he is God. This climax has to be prepared for by self-renunciation, and by studying the divine in nature. Only to the highest order of saints, to the "souls born of God," it has been given to apprehend God without the aid of external things; they are thus exalted above the help of symbols. But into this highest sphere only those can be admitted who, through purity of life, have been found worthy. And purity necessarily involves self-sacrifice. Purified and energised, the human soul can ascend the Mount of Contemplation; there it loses consciousness of self, for there it sees God face to face. There He is apprehended, not by the powers of the intellect, but by direct intuition.

This mystical apprehension of God is based on

# VII. THE MYSTICISM OF THE GREEK CHURCH

THE transition from apostolic piety to theological mysticism was foreshadowed even in Christ's lifetime by the teachings of some learned Jews in Alexandria, who endeavoured to reconcile Eastern notions and Western thought, probably primarily with the idea of establishing the right of existence of Judaism in the Capital of Hellenic culture. There, in modest retirement, lived the Jew Philo, a musing scribe, to whom occasional flashes of genius cannot be denied, but who possessed no real literary talent, was superstitious and dilettantish. Yet he was the man first to put into words what, for centuries to come, was to form the bulwark of the Neo-Platonic school. With Moses in the one hand and Plato in the other, he tried to make a bargain between the two by deducing Platonic teaching from the writings of Moses, and by converting law and revelation into philosophy and science. He did so by speculation, and his speculation was mysticism. Not that he betrayed the God of his fathers; on the





contrary, God was very real to him, as the God revealed by Moses. Yet, to comprehend Him, or explain Him, he resorted to Platonism. God is that which abides for ever, the inexpressible, the unapproachable: "Thou shalt see My back parts, but My face shall not be seen." Only in silent contemplation can God be apprehended, for we know of nothing whereby to compare Him. If we are to know Him He must be within us. He breathed the breath of life into us, and with it something of His own nature, and He is the earnest of the highest in us. The inspired person, in whom God has verily breathed of His breath, can, with full confidence, say that he is God. This climax has to be prepared for by self-renunciation, and by studying the divine in nature. Only to the highest order of saints, to the "souls born of God," it has been given to apprehend God without the aid of external things; they are thus exalted above the help of symbols. But into this highest sphere only those can be admitted who, through purity of life, have been found worthy. And purity necessarily involves self-sacrifice. Purified and energised, the human soul can ascend the Mount of Contemplation; there it loses consciousness of self, for there it sees God face to face. There He is apprehended, not by the powers of the intellect, but by direct intuition.

This mystical apprehension of God is based on

the notion that all things ultimately flow back to God, and the active factor in the Godhead, the creative power by whom all things are, is the *logos* (or pure intelligence). Philo, like Plato, and afterwards the Neo-Platonists, made this *logos* into an inferior deity, the one with whom man has to do. Here again Philo detects a resemblance between Moses and Plato, for what Plato calls the "supreme idea," Moses calls the "angel of the Lord," and Philo, by describing him as "God's only beloved Son," built a bridge which, presently, was to be of much service in Christian speculation.

Alexandria continued to be the city where most of these things were reasoned out, and it is interesting to note how persistently the Christian thinkers, in their desire to find a bond between science and revelation, chose the same path which the Alexandrian Jew had trod.

Constantly the teachers of Christianity had to guard against the attacks of the Gentiles, and even more against the dangerous insinuations of the still semi-Gentile Christian sects. The old defenders of the Christian faith have fought honestly against all this open and secret heathenism. By this time the dogmas of Christianity had so far been formulated, that not only the teachers were keenly alive to the difference between their views and those of the Gentiles, but



that the laity also realised what was expected of them. The Fathers of the Church, Tertullian and Irenæus, stood firm as watchmen of the Western Church, and the short formula called "the Apostles' Creed"—to which Irenæus, in accordance with the demands of those days, attributed Apostolic sanction—became for all times, at any rate in the Western Church, a stronghold against the attempts of the Gentile world to efface or defeat Christianity.

Protected by such clearly-marked boundaries, and strong in the greater stability of its internal arrangements, the Church began to take a kindlier view of the cultural advantages the Gentile world afforded, and even made use of them in building up the edifice of Christianity. The world should see that the Church was a well-organised, compact body, and that its views were quite as intelligent, only much deeper, than those of any heathen system. This early attempt at Christian theology was made in Alexandria by the first theological faculty of Christendom.

Clement of Alexandria was the man who took the initiative, by planning a system of such magnitude as has hardly been equalled by any later theologian. His intention was not only to formulate the Christian faith, but to give an exposition of the Christian verities which would appeal also to the intellect and the moral require-

ments of the Gentiles, a system in which they would find everything that mind and soul could desire.

This edifice—fragmentary though it was as it left the hands of Clement—clearly showed that its foundation was Christ, that its beams and stones were taken from the Bible, but it also showed that its construction and the mortar which bound the whole together were of Hellenic composition. Not only is Plato constantly referred to as the great master of thought, on whose authority Clement rests many of his statements, but all that there is in it of a speculative nature, all that is outside the practical philosophy of the Bible, is very often a mere copy of Plato and other heathen philosophers. And this was the more fatal, as Clement, being wholly imbued with Greek—*i.e.*, late Greek—notions, held that speculation was the only way by which God could be approached, as being the highest function of the human mind. Consequently it was necessary to create a form of religion based on speculation, and to conceive a God who could only be laid hold of and apprehended by speculation. But this God was not the God of the Bible, and this speculative piety was not Christianity; it was mysticism.

In his treatise Clement appears rather as a gnostic or preacher of mysticism, than as an



expounder of Christian truths. The word *gnosis*, "knowledge,"—carefully avoided in the Gospel of John,—is the basis of his system, and descriptive of his philosophy. *Gnosis*, says Clement, is more than faith. Faith is only a crude knowledge of necessary truths for the convenience of people who have no time for thinking; but *gnosis* is philosophic faith.

It may seem strange to us, not only that he places knowledge so far above faith, but that with an evidently slight understanding of the characteristic features of faith, he mistakes faith for an inferior kind of knowledge. It reveals the Greek tendencies in him, and it shows the imperfect mental condition of the early Christian Church as a whole.

But what are we to think of the first Christian professor of theology, when he boldly declares that if the well-instructed Christian (to whom he applies the name of *gnostic*) should have to choose between the knowledge of God and eternal salvation, and if these two things which ought to be inseparable could be conceived as detached, he would, without hesitation, choose to know God?

On such dry ground, and in such thin air, Christianity was fated to work out its theology. No wonder that the result was poor. But although it was bad Christianity, there was good in

it. No one can deny to Clement a high-mindedness, a purity and spirituality, which enabled him to draw the best out of Greek enthusiasm, and to introduce into the Christian doctrine an element worthy of it. For this highest apprehension or knowledge of God elevates the soul above all earthly lusts and desires, and fills it with an indissoluble love towards God. This is the supreme height of Platonism, but it is also mysticism, for Clement describes this love as disinterested, as that condition of blissful equanimity of mind in which mysticism is in its element.

And, in conclusion, Clement's theories are both Platonic and mystical, in that he makes *purity* the way to knowledge. It is, therefore, not only a matter of meditation, but it is also a question of morality whether or no this sanctuary of apprehension can be entered; and again, not mere morality suffices, it must be Christian morality. At this point we at last discover that there is Christianity underlying his reasonings, for he makes love, as well as purity, a necessary stipulation. But only for the acquirement of knowledge, *gnosis*. In our day, we, as Christians, should reverse the statement, and say that we only give place to knowledge in so far as it leads the way to love.

Consistent with all this, God is conceived with the usual heathen attributes of indiscriminate



unity, unqualified oneness, and such-like vague expressions, into which one so easily falls by thinking away all that is substantial in our conception of Him; a vagueness, in fact, which characterises the dreamy nature of the faith. As a matter of course, Christ is declared to be the *logos*, and what there is lacking in the conception of God is made up in the *logos*, which thus becomes the expressed consciousness of God, that part of the Godhead by which the world was created, and the only part of the Godhead with which the world has to reckon.

To his contemporaries the writings of Clement appeared the height of all Christianity and Christian knowledge. How far short he fell from the real height of Gospel Christianity we perceive when comparing his theories with the Gospel of John. Christianity, expressed in Greek form, became Hellenism expressed in Christian form. Origen, the great and worthy disciple of Clement, while confirming and completing the system, is so thoroughly Greek when he rises into the higher speculative regions, that the Greek Church made no difficulty in accepting all he taught.

Yet neither Origen not Clement were mystics in the true sense of the word; their mysticism was only mysticism in part. But they manufactured the apparatus used by the mystics of later generations for making Greek mysticism

popular on Christian territory ; and the Christians who adopted their practices had a valid excuse for doing so, and were, to a certain extent, justified in developing their theories.

While the Fathers were thus building up the ecclesiastical system, Christian communities rose up around them, and monasticism was taking root and developing rapidly. The monks who supplanted the Greek ascetics vied with the heathen sectaries in intellectual achievements. As a matter of fact, all aimed at the same thing. Children of Greece they all were, whether Gentile or Christian, and their common object was to gain immortality, or, perhaps more strictly correct, they all wanted to make sure that their mortal nature would be changed into an immortal one. Far indeed the Greeks had wandered from their original basis ! For the old belief was that a limit was set to mortal man, a boundary that could not be passed, an insuperable difference fixed between man and those whom they called the " immortals." This belief had now changed into the ardent desire to bridge over the gulf and to do away with all differences.

The popular " Mysteries " which formed the religion of half the known world of those days, and promised salvation to the initiated, went hand in hand with mysticism. They played the same



tune in endless variations, but the theme was always the raising of human nature into the divine nature.

Christian mysticism, fitfully practised in deserts, in solitary places, and now also in monasteries, taught that this ultimate goal could not be reached except by Christ indwelling man. The " I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," of the Epistle to the Galatians, was now brought into practice in good earnest ; or, perhaps more correctly, this saying was robbed of its deep spiritual meaning, and made into a material fact. " Christ must spiritually be born in each one of us," Methodius declares, about the year 300, and by the expression " spiritually " (*noētōs*) he means, by meditation. Whoever thus receives Christ into himself is born of Christ, and the Christ dwelling in him, passes again, in thought, through all the phases of his suffering. This agrees with what Origen had declared, namely, that the enlightened Christian had no need of the Crucified One, because the man who is perfect bears within himself the Crucified One and his crucifixion.

And so we meet the same thing in all the stages of the Church's history on Greek, and, in our days also, on Russian soil. " The Greek monks," says Harnack, " live to-day as they lived a thousand years ago, in silent contemplation and blissful ignorance. They labour only in so far as it is an

absolute necessity for their sustenance, but to this day the learned monk is a silent reproach to the uncultured one, the one who avoids nature to the one who loves it. Still the labouring hermit feels his conscience reproach him as he watches the brother who neither labours, nor thinks, nor speaks, who waits in lonely contemplation and self-torture until the divine light at last illumines him" (*Mönchtum*, p. 27). The shining in of this divine light to which all aspire may be described in the words of Methodius, as consisting in being made "like God" (*homoiesis theo*), the same expression which the later Greek philosophers used to describe the condition of highest bliss.

With this background much of what seems unintelligible becomes clear, namely, how it was possible that the Greek Church for so many centuries could devote its best energies to disputing about the dual nature of Christ; how it was possible that learned inquiries and clamorous synods, Court intrigues and street riots, could be swayed by such abstract questions as whether the Son had the same nature as the Father, etc. We can now understand the triumph with which Athanasius asserted that Christ in the fullest sense of the word was "very God and very man." Such an one the Christ must be if He is to help man to change his human nature and raise it on to a higher level. God incarnate is the surety that



God and man can meet, and that there can be communion between them. As soon as one or the other of Christ's natures is contracted or limited, it means that in that same measure man's eternal happiness becomes contracted or limited, and his salvation incomplete. So thoroughly Greek is Athanasius, that by salvation he understands before all things salvation from death, and by eternal happiness, immortality, and oneness with God.

The ascetic monks understood his words to mean that mysticism, as practised by them, would lead to the desired end; that "receiving Christ" meant verily and truly being indwelt by the Godhead, and that it was not a mere living in close communion with God. They took the metaphysical statement literally and practically, and, as the monks have to a very large extent influenced the setting up of the dogmas of the Church, the creed ascribed to Athanasius has by them been amplified and encumbered with the damnatory explanatory and speculative clauses, and made into the clumsy complex which is our inheritance of the Church of old.

The great difference between the theology of East and West is that in the East *growth* takes place by *accumulation*; only in the West do we find *reconstruction*. For there it is a starting afresh, an inquiry into what underlies the traditions,

and all that one learns of the past is viewed in the light of the present in which one lives. The Greek Church rightly calls itself orthodox, for in its exclusiveness it admits of no teaching that is not traditional and webbed in speculation. The only source of renovation which it could sanction is in the worship of the Church. New rites and ceremonies were constantly introduced, half-concealed or manifest relics of heathendom taking refuge under the sheltering roof of the Church. And every time a Greek or Slavonic deity was given entrance, one more was added to the multitude of saints. Thus a mysticism grew up, in substance as heathenish as the customs and superstitions of the people for whose benefit and blessing it was practised.

The last product of the Eastern Church before it sank entirely into self-absorbed contemplation was this towering edifice of Greek learning, in which all that later philosophy and early mysticism, ritualism, and monkdom had concocted, was gathered into one huge system, known as the writings of *Dionysius the Areopagite*. On this curious compound of the sixth century, attributed to the Areopagite,—but the real author of which is unknown,—the philosophy of which is an almost exact copy of the Neo-Platonic Proclus, Eastern Catholicism has built its hierarchy. Through this system—Greek from top to bottom—paganism,



its mysteries, its pantheon, and philosophy were smuggled into the Church.

The system was introduced also into the Western Church, and created enthusiasm everywhere. The Emperor Michael of Byzantium sent the book to Lewis the Pious; and Charles the Bald ordered it to be translated into Latin by the cleverest man of his reign. Roman Catholicism was by that time established in all essential points, on principles other than these Greek notions. Ecclesiastical speculation had not yet made much way there, and the Scholastics therefore welcomed the advent of this magnificent exposition as a happy introduction to those supernal regions.

The book has a great charm. It carries the reader away into regions and heights which he would otherwise have no chance of visiting. It lifts him far above the world and all mundane things,—throwing away as ballast all the realities of life,—into ever higher, lighter, more ethereal spheres. It leads him from the consideration of plants and animals, to men, priests, monks, and beyond them to saints and demons, angels and archangels, until he reaches the triune Godhead, and finally draws near to the Supreme Deity, the God who is exalted above all Trinity and Unity. Him he cannot approach in the ordinary way in which he can apprehend the things of this world, nor can he find Him by threading his way through

the labyrinth of thought which leads to the knowledge of God. No, this highest pinnacle of bliss can only be reached by " circular " meditation, in which the soul's whole energy is concentrated on the Godhead, and loses itself in contemplation.

This psychological analysis has its undoubted merit. The mystical organ and the mystical condition are very clearly described. Thought and sense pass away, and with them all that can be felt or perceived, all that is, and all that is not ; and so, deprived of all sensibility (*agnostōs*), the soul ascends to the Unity which is exalted above all essence and knowledge. This, indeed, is dipping into the mystical obscurity of insensibility, where all recognised differences vanish, because the intellect is put aside ; there one becomes united with Him who is altogether incomprehensible, and through this union with the incomprehensible the soul is made like unto God (*theoeidês*).

The God who is to be apprehended with such a darkened understanding is necessarily indefinable, and, as a specimen of the logic of the mystic who has reached this highest pinnacle of speculation, let us listen to what Dionysius has to tell us about the essence of God. He is the super-eminent existence, a unity above all unity, an incomprehensible intelligence, an unutterable word. By



negativing all that is positive, and avoiding all that is sensible, one attains at last to the chemically pure Deity.

When " negative theology " has thus risen above the broad multiplicity of things to the highest cause of all, and brought the soul silently into mystical union with the inexpressible, then " affirmative theology " comes down to meet multiplicity. Then the Nameless One becomes all-comprehending. He is the sun and the stars, fire and water, He is all that is. Out of this Divine essence all beings proceed. Even as it unfolds at once into a Divine Trinity, so in ever-increasing multiplicity it flows down to the earth, and the way downwards as well as upwards is the same, through celestial and terrestial hierarchies, through the hosts of angels, through episcopate and priesthood, down to the men and animals of this world. And so Platonic is this system that we recognise in it at once Plato's favourite idea, that all that is good and beautiful is only good and beautiful because it is a part of the Divine nature.

What Plato says of the Divine Eros, of the passionate longing to catch a glimpse of that transcendent beauty, became the theme of a hymn re-echoing throughout all Neo-Platonism, and singing of a love-chain which connects heaven and earth. In the same way the Areopagite speaks of erotic links which, as the agents of

divine Providence, come down to mankind, and as the soul's ardent longing and devoted love ascend back to God.

All this forms one beautiful harmonious whole supported by mystic energy, and in order that the harmony may not be broken by showing the rude reverse side of life, evil is conveniently disposed of after the manner of the Neo-Platonic school, already hinted at by Philo, but more fully unfolded by Proclus, who declared that : Evil is not an independent agent ; in itself it is nothing, it is a want, a lack, an omission, a shortcoming in character and life, will and power ; failings which are all remedied in proportion as one draws life and strength from the divine source.

In other words, the heathen aspect of the system of the universe had conquered all along the line in Christianity, and had been sanctioned and sanctified by the Church. Heaven was now so full with pantheism, trinity, and pantheon, that there was scarcely room for the Heavenly Father of the Gospel. The high dignitaries of the hierarchy trampled on the brotherly love commended in the Gospel ; the great account between good and evil was closed, and the only evil that remained was human insufficiency, the lack in man of the higher nature, and this the Church could easily make good by means of sanctification and sacraments.



This dazzling book was presented to the Carolinean ruler with the message that it was the safeguard against all heresy, and throughout the Middle Ages it has been the guiding star of the teachers of Scholasticism, and of the heroes of mysticism.

It needed the clear perception of a Luther to see through the deceit. His keen intellect and broad humour tore the fabric. " A pack of lies and fables," he says in his *Table Talk*, and when he speaks more guardedly, and in Latin, he exclaims : " As to what Dionysius says about angels in his *Celestial Hierarchy*,—a book which has worried many inquiring and superstitious folk,—I ask with what authority and on what grounds does he make his assertions ? May it not altogether be a chimera, which, when investigated, vanishes like a vision of the night ?

" And with his mystical theology, so greatly eulogised by ignorant theologians, he also gives great offence. There is more Platonism than Christianity in it, and my advice to Christians is : have nothing to do with it ! "

This is the protest of Christianity against the paganism of Scholasticism. This is the Reformer's historical view of the source to which Christian speculation must be traced. In Luther, evangelical theology has a strong ally against the efforts of Protestantism to destroy its own cause

by theological metaphysics, the component parts of which, properly considered, are unconscious adaptations of heathenism. Yet Luther himself was not free from mysticism, and an apt and eager student of the art. But he knew—and this is the gist of the matter—how to distinguish heathenism from Christianity, and he felt the difference keenly, even in his own moments of mystical rapture.

## VIII. THE MYSTICISM OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

It was not merely through his own sagacity that Luther so easily disposed of the philosophical tissue woven by the Areopagite, but this famous system had already in the course of centuries been undermined in the Christian Church by the very men who had always upheld it with traditional scruple. For these men belonged to the Roman Church which had grown up on the soil of the Roman Empire. We have to bear this in mind to understand why the Church, when it was transplanted from East to West, became imbued with new strength and vitality. It inherited from the Roman Empire three things, namely, *discipline* and *esprit de corps*, the fundamental principle on which the Roman State was built ; strict *obedience*, the basis of Roman law ; and personal *morality*, which made Stoicism, the ideal of Roman philosophy, respected by most and realised by the best.

Many other things also the Church took over from the Roman State, such as vestments, ritual, saints, and superstitions, but the essential differ-

ence between Greek and Roman Christianity did not lie in any of these.

The Roman citizens who became Christians brought along with them their Roman spirit, just as the Greek Christians brought their Hellenism. The Romans made Christianity into a practical affair, just as the Greeks had made it a matter of theoretical contemplation. Philosophical dogmas were pushed into the background to make room for a moral and juridical regulation of Christian life. The learned, finely spun-out arguments about the Trinity and the double nature of Christ were looked upon as exhausted; other questions, more closely connected with everyday life, were now at the order, such as: What is my Christian duty? What is my guilt? What punishment have I deserved? Where can I find forgiveness?

Now at last Christianity was once more what it was in the old apostolic days: a matter of personal worth, of personal salvation; now at last sin and grace were again looked at in a Christian light. And therefore the Church on Roman ground was not primarily an institution for initiation into mysteries, and for receiving immortal life, but rather the place where the law was read and forgiveness obtained. Thus the Church became—more than the Greeks had ever made it—a real community, in which individuals were received



and cared for, punished or rewarded,—and led into the way of salvation.

*Repentance* and *correction* was the first task the Roman Church set itself to perform in its members, and the priests, hardened by self-discipline, became very different men from the dreaming monks of the East. But these different priests had also different duties. God's forgiveness can only be imparted through channels; grace can only be obtained through visible means of grace, and these are in the hands of priests. The Church was made the repository and the distributor of the sacraments, and as the Church grew in power so the sacraments grew in efficacy.

As an outward institution of salvation the Roman Church was put in order by the Popes Leo and Gregory, but its inner life was created by *St. Augustine*. While the former carefully organised and methodised the worship and ritual of the Church, and laid down the law for all Church matters, Augustine, through strong inner experiences, had already discovered that the law within the heart is the law of the life to be lived within these mighty walls. While the former were fretting and worrying about many external things, he only minded the one thing that is needful. God and my soul is what I have to understand. That and nothing else. Looking into his soul, he sees *sin*; looking up to God, he finds *grace*. And

through him these two words again received the old significance they had for Paul, but which had been lost in the argumentative theories of the Greek Church. For both Paul and Augustine were men who had lived and suffered, sinned and sorrowed, before they found pardon and peace. They spoke from personal experience, they knew what was wrong and what human nature required. The grace which St. Augustine preached is, therefore, before all things the grace of *forgiveness* (*gratia remissionis*). But for a Christian it is not enough that his sins be forgiven him. Faith, to him, is something positive, a life in God, and where Augustine describes this—and this he does most often in his personal *Confessions*—there is in his language a romanticism and an enthusiasm which spring from this deep, purely personal source. He speaks of a heart that is disquiet until it finds rest in God; of the inspiration of love which elevates the soul to God. In this *inspiratio caritatis* he finds the true life and energising power of faith, all that man needs. Where this inspired love governs the heart, man has faith, he is justified, he is redeemed; he needs no external aid, and the grace with which God meets the ardent desire of his heart is no longer only the grace of forgiveness, it is the grace of inspiration (*gratia inspirationis*).

With this new qualification of faith a new mysticism has been created; not the mysticism of



contemplation, but the *mysticism of love*. The relationship towards God has suddenly become practical and intimate; it has been transformed into the "*passion of intimacy*," as Sören Kirkegaard calls it. The relation between God and men has now become absolute. We must be " rooted and grounded in love " if we would call ourselves Christians, *in caritate radicatus*. We must be wholly God's if we would be saved; we must find ourselves again in Him, the only *One* out of whom flows all the multiplicity of the world. It is not: love God, and then love all things; but love God, and only esteem the things of this world in so far as God is reflected in them. For He is the only reality, the only true and really existing One. Therefore to live and exist truly one must have part with Him, depend on Him, rejoice in Him. He is, so to speak, a capital on which one must draw to be kept alive.

This rejoicing in God (*fruitio Dei*), which constitutes the true and eternal life, is only allotted to us at rare moments of losing ourselves in God. Then for a short space the longing for God, which is implanted in human nature, the hunger for that real life, is satisfied. Then we experience in all its fulness the grace of inspiration, of being filled with the love of God, which no man can give himself; then we realise that sin is the absence of God's presence, God's love, and God's reality.

Of his inner experiences of this relationship with God, Augustine tells us in his *Confessions*, the most celebrated autobiography and the first psychological self-portraiture in the literature of antiquity. And these experiences were not confined to the internal struggles of his youth, nor to the tears and the joy of his conversion, which so many Christians have taken for their pattern, and which became the fashion among the mystics of following ages ; but when he describes the last day he spent with his mother he also speaks of a mystical rapture, and a soaring up into spiritual heights.

One evening, when he with his mother had reached Ostia after a long and tiring journey, they were standing alone together, leaning against a window which overlooked gardens and stream. " Thus alone, we lost ourselves in sweet communion, and, turning our thoughts away from the past, we looked into that which lay before us, and asked ourselves, in the presence of truth, what the everlasting life of the saints would be like, that which no eye hath seen, no ear heard, and that hath not entered into any man's mind. Thirsting we opened our hearts to drink of the water of life from the spring which is in Thee, that we, our thirst quenched according to our power, might be able to meditate upon so sublime a subject. And when our conversation had led us to the conclusion, that even the highest sensual enjoyment which, with



all its splendour, yet remains corporeal, could give us no conception of the loveliness and glory of that future life, much less be compared with it, we were suddenly seized with a yet stronger desire, and rose in spirit step by step into the heavenlies, from where sun and moon and stars shine down upon the earth ; and ever higher we ascended in our inner consciousness, meditating upon Thy works, discussing and admiring them, and so we reached the spirit world, and this also we surpassed, and rose up to the region of inexhaustible fulness, where Thou leadest Israel into the paths of truth, and where the wisdom is found from whence all things proceed, the things which now are, which were, and shall be.

" And thus we spoke : When in one's body the storm of the flesh is silenced, when the voices of land and sea and air are hushed, and the canopy of heaven is silent ; when the soul is mute within itself, and forgetting self rises above itself ; when the dreams and fancies of the imagination are silent ; when every tongue and every sense and all that is perishable in one is silent . . . and when then the Creator speaks, not through any of these, but speaks Himself directly, and we thus hear His voice, not from any man's lips, and not from the lips of angels; not in thunder and darkness, and not in unintelligible parables, but hear Him, whom we adore in these things, Himself alone apart

from them all, even as we have risen above them, and in rapturous flights of thought have reached the eternal wisdom which is highly exalted above all ; if then this condition could be a lasting one, and all other thoughts and imaginings of a different nature could be banished for ever, and the beholder were thus carried away, consumed, swallowed up in joy, tasting of eternal bliss, and the soul's yearning satisfied, would not this be the moment to which those words apply : ' Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ' ? "

All this ought to be Christian logic ; it is one of the greatest teachers of the Church who thus speaks from the zenith of his life's experience. And yet, notwithstanding he introduces so many Bible words and expressions, there is in all this not a single thought or idea which could have taken shape without the cement of Platonism. Here are two pious souls ascending step by step through all the regions of creation until they reach the place where the souls are at home ; higher still, to where they touch the Eternal Truth, the essence of all being. There, with awakened senses, they experience a felicity far excelling all sensual joy, and they have a foretaste of that blessed vision which will be vouchsafed to those in whom all things are silenced and God alone speaks.

If this last link in the chain were missing, one might virtually take this sketch as descriptive of



the ecstatic condition of the Neo-Platonist. How could it be otherwise ? Augustine's speculative doctrine of the deity was in all essentials the same as that of the Neo-Platonic school. He even admits that " they knew quite well where they had to get to, only they did not know the way." For the way is Christ. Therefore, when Augustine wants to describe what he experienced in this mystical vision, he must, so to speak, talk Greek. And this gives no offence ; for in this Christian hero, Platonic philosophy and Christian faith and feeling have been harmoniously blended together. Augustine, although he borrowed much, knew what profit to make of the foreign material. A mistake which Protestantism often commits is to believe that Christianity can only be kept pure by not accepting any of the popular notions of the time. This is not so. Christianity rather preserves its purity by filling the prevailing ideas with its own vitality. Augustine realised this, but the Fathers of the Church who thought they followed in his footsteps understood it differently, and the mysticism with which Christian theology crowned its system became, during the succeeding six or seven hundred years, more an excrescence of the old theories which Augustine had amalgamated into his system, than a deeper entering into the new views which he had exhibited. They fell headlong back into Greek systems, and even a mighty

intellect like John Scotus Erigena was in reality only able to reproduce Dionysius the Areopagite.

The principal interests and strength of the Roman Church, however, did not lie in this speculative region. To apprehend God mystically was the much-valued privilege of the priesthood, but not a power in their hands. There was another kind of mysticism that gave them this authoritative power. To this they devoted all their energy, and developed it to a high state of perfection. This was *sacramental* mysticism.

The Catholic priests, who have always been fond of comparing themselves to shepherds, have had very much the same experience as their colleagues, the shepherds in the field. They think they are the leaders of the flock, but the sheep know better, and the shepherd, with his crook and call, has in the end to accommodate himself to the pasture which the flock has selected by paths of their own choosing. Although Augustine, in his spiritual and personal Christianity, stood infinitely higher than Gregory the Great, with his masses and saints, his purgatory, penances, and sacraments, yet Gregory was " the shepherd," the man who, in effect, settled the internal arrangements of the Church. For he had the sheep on his side ; he knew the kind of pasture they liked. Cherished customs of Romish heathendom were by him admitted into the Church, and in spite of



all the wisdom, the discretion, the philosophy exhibited by the teachers who, after him, endeavoured to make theology into a field of speculative thought, the insensitive will of the laity prevailed. Their superstitions and sensuality, their love for the corporeal and the miraculous, showed the masters of Scholasticism in which direction their work lay, and provided them with the material for building up their system. The formulæ were still those of Augustine, but the methods became more and more those of Gregory. In this light we understand why the sacraments were made so much of by the teachers of the Scholastic school, and why they spent all their reasoning powers in trying to explain their meaning and importance, although Augustine had suggested very different matter for thought.

To the Churchmen of the Middle Ages, the sacraments were more than holy acts and elements ; in their eyes the sacraments formed a separate province in the constitution of the universe, over which the Church was set to rule. This view was based on mysticism, the mysticism which the Church long ago had borrowed from Plato, but which, in course of time, had been re-baptized and re-inaugurated so many times, that it required sharp eyes to detect its heathen derivation. *Universalia sunt realia*, " Generality is reality," they said. Hegel and his followers

said : " The Ideal is the real," which comes very much to the same thing. Words and conceptions which to us symbolise existing things ; creations of the imagination to express the things which our bodily senses perceive,—are to them the true realities themselves, from which the things which we call real have proceeded ; and consequently the realities of this world are merely the reflected image in which the supremest reality chooses to manifest itself. These ideas and reflections are for the Church, as for Plato, the one sound and solid principle from which all material things derive their right of being, and the world its claim to the citizenship of heaven. The verities of faith are, therefore, not a something which Christian men happen to believe in ; no, they reasoned thus : All men believe something ; therefore faith is common property, therefore a reality, therefore an incontestable truth. The Church, our home on earth, is but a reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem, where glory dwells, and where is the fountain of grace. And that the Church is called catholic, *i.e.* " universal "—" common," is, according to this logic, a further guarantee of its being the true Church ; it is real, because it is universal.

And the Church is indispensable, because it forms the link between the two kingdoms, the *Kingdom of Grace* above, and the *Kingdom of Nature* below. Of Nature they knew about as



much as Aristotle knew of it. The physical theories of the Greek sage were fitted into the Platonic Church system, because he represented nature as forming one harmonious whole, held together by a conscious power, which betrays a highest cause and a highest purpose. For this reason, the Aristotelian theory of nature received a place in the great edifice which reached up into the heavens, and became a ladder, leading up step by step into the kingdom of Grace : from the visible into the invisible ; from the perishable into the imperishable.

What the theory of ideas had been for Plato, the kingdom of Grace became for Scholasticism. Grace, *i.e.* divine vitality, eternal life, the power of immortality and final salvation, *that* is the power which supports the world. It is the promise of the real life, and where nature is receptive of grace, its life is no longer a merely perishable existence.

With his flesh and blood, man belongs to the kingdom of nature. If he would conquer death, and in this life overcome the perishable nature in which he has been born, he must have recourse to grace, *i.e.* the Church, for she is the dispenser of the means of grace. She baptizes with water and anoints with oil ; she provides the salt and the light ; she consecrates the bread and pours out the wine ; she blesses men, and imposes

penalties for shortcomings; she casts out the devil out of our human flesh, and raises marriage above the bonds of lower nature; she also anoints the feet of the believer before he starts on his last journey, in order that he may find his true home. In these sacraments and sacramental acts, with their palpable materialism and their priestly blessing, the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace meet. They spiritualise nature and materialise the divine efficacy. This is the *unio mystica* which the people need, for it is a mystery which leads to something, to eternal salvation, and it is accessible to all. And the more the Church became consolidated as a Church, the more she learned to value the power which the people's craving for salvation had placed into her hands. By virtue of the sacraments, she is arbiter of life and death, she has the monopoly of the fountain of life: "Outside the Church, no hope of salvation."

Special prominence is given to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the great doctrinal disputes of the Carolinian days, its significance was discussed in one way and another, and the interpretation which gave the widest range to mysticism and made holy things into palpable magic, carried the day. This magical efficacy was smuggled in under the spiritual form of the Augustinian doctrine, as, for instance, in the celebrated treatise



on the Last Supper, by Paschasius Radbertus (831). He says quite complaisantly: "The sacrament is the spiritual food of faith; to eat the flesh of Christ, is to abide in Him. Faith has to do with the invisible, therefore the eye of faith looks beyond the visible, and only beholds the divine which is behind." These carefully chosen words contain a good deal of ancient Greek heathenism, and here we have to do, not only with Dionysius the Areopagite, but with Dionysius the Wine-god. Not only the soul, but the body also feeds on the sacrament; our flesh, as well as our spirit, is thereby made fit for immortality and incorruption. The Greeks cherished this idea, because immortality was the aim and object of their religion, and the Lord's Supper became for them one continuous incarnation, a perpetual repetition of Christ's becoming man, and this was all they wished for, for to them it was a pledge that even as the divine could put on human flesh, so our flesh can put on immortality. By partaking of the body of Christ, He becomes incarnate in me, and by mystical union I become a partaker of the divine nature, and possess in my own flesh and blood the power of immortal life. The Greek notions about "the body of Christ" were doubtless of a somewhat vague and fanciful character; but the Fathers of the Western Church were men who desired to be

clear and explicit, and to keep to realities. Therefore a Paschasius Radbertus—whose doctrine on the Lord's Supper was accepted as orthodox—emphatically declares that the body of Christ, as partaken of in the Lord's Supper, is in very deed that which was born of the Virgin Mary, and that as the host is being blessed a *change* takes place, by which the bread is verily made into the body of Christ, but, he says: the portion of the bread which is perceptible to our bodily senses, remains unchanged.

Such things could be said and believed in the Middle Ages, even by the most faithful sons of the Church, because it represented something definite to their minds. The idea was based on Platonic logic, which says: the essence and reality of things is from above; the invisible is the real, that which thou seest is not real. Consequently in that what the senses perceive a divine reality may be present, capable of assuming for a fleeting moment the properties of the visible thing; the divine body and the divine blood can take the form of bread and wine.

It was natural and necessary that this kind of logic should be overthrown before sacramental mysticism could be done away with,—and the transformation took place in the very heart of Scholastic philosophy. The *Nominalists* (as the followers of the new school were called), whose



notions about names, ideas, and conceptions were about the same as ours are, have helped quite as much as a Savonarola and a Huss to prepare the way for the Reformation. Luther was a declared disciple of the Nominalist Occam, and as he, for himself, refused to have anything to do with Platonic philosophy, he also succeeded in taking away from the sacraments their material mysticism. In his earliest writings the idea of Christ's corporeal presence in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was forced to the background The sacramental words make the sacrament. In them the whole Gospel is contained: "forgiveness, life, salvation," and if from the extreme left of the Reformation movement those much more pronounced radical views had not been advanced, in which Luther scented the rebellious spirit of the Anabaptists, he would probably have abided by his original view. But Karlstadt's exaggerated exposition of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper irritated Luther, and from that time he mistrusted every symbolical interpretation, even Zwingli's much more guarded one. More and more boldly he insists on the actual words of the Bible, and Christ's corporeal presence in the sacrament, and many times it would seem as if his views are but a reflection of the Roman interpretation.

The mysticism of visible signs and miracles ran

into paganism, and remained pagan, as far as the Roman Church was concerned. Yet, in this same Church there grew up, simultaneously, something which was true Christian mysticism, an inner life, lived in Christ, and in which Christ lived. This also had its root in Augustine. For his mysticism was not merely a state of ecstatic transport which carried him beyond the stars; his ardent desire was that the living Christ should dwell in him. Augustine introduced the great and new thought which the Fathers of the Eastern Church knew only vaguely or not at all, namely, that living in Christ is a *personal* matter. The Greek monks, like the Greek theologians, saw in Christ from first to last the Trinitarian figure about whose place in the Godhead there was much dispute, but to whom nevertheless they all assigned a place, some of them an exclusive one in the Godhead. Before their speculative zeal the historical facts fell into the background. The feelings with which a modern Christian regards his Saviour, feelings of personal devotion and gratitude, and of the responsibility laid upon him, these were formerly not much thought of; all that mattered was whether he was God enough to impart godliness, and man enough for men through him to be made partakers thereof.

For Augustine the meeting of the soul with God



was a much simpler matter. To him it was communion in the enthusiasm of love, and Greek Christian mysticism was therefore necessarily discarded by him. But this by no means implies that Christ was discarded. It was only that Augustine looked at him with different eyes, and felt for him something else than the selfish hunger for immortal life. He saw the humanness in the life of Jesus, and realised that this also was precious to mankind, in the first place because God Himself had humbled Himself therein. "I believe that God became man for us, to be to us an example of humility and to show us what God's love is. And this helps us to realise and to hold fast in our hearts that the self-abasement in which it pleased God to be born of a woman, and allowed Himself to be scorned and rejected and put to death by men, is the best remedy for our puffed-up pride. He was crucified—now it depends on thee to take His poverty upon thyself; far from thee He lived, but in poverty He comes nigh unto thee."

When Augustine speaks in terms like these, not as arguing for a theological problem but out of the fulness of his heart, he produces an image of Christ similar to Paul's conception of Him, an image which in the course of the intervening centuries of Apostolic Christianity had been lost. When Paul sums up his exhortation in the words: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ

Jesus," he refers to Christ's great humility, to His taking the form of a servant, to His being obedient even unto death, in order to bring home to us what was the mind of Christ ; and Augustine does practically the same. His definition of Christianity is that it is a state of mind to which only a Christian can attain. And what state of mind is it which distinguishes the Christian from the heathen man ? That he believes in that which Paul lived and preached : that strength is made perfect in weakness ; that what the world despises is acceptable with God ; that humiliation and scorn and suffering are the conditions for the reward, and that nothing can be gained until one has learned to despise worldly greatness, power, and honour. This is Christianity, for so Christ was, and this the Church has never quite forgotten, even in its most miserable and confused state.

In other words, this is *historical Christianity*, based on the historical figure of Christ and the divine power dwelling in him showing forth in his life and suffering. But this simple exposition of Christ by no means exhausts all that Augustine had to say about him, for he corroborates, without disputing them, many of the existing notions of the Church. And it does not express all that the Church thought of Christ in the time immediately following Augustine. The Church did not form its conception of Christ in the light of the new



truths which Augustine had revealed, yet, he had spoken the word, and it but waited the right moment to come to fruition.

This moment came with the Crusades, and with the apostle of the time of the Crusades, *Bernard of Clairvaux*. This adventurous going out into the world, this cultural struggle with the Saracens, this strange confusion of Christian ideals and Byzantine politics, were all necessary to make the people understand and realise who Christ really was. It was necessary for them personally to visit the country where Christ himself had walked, they had to fight and bleed before Jerusalem, kneel at the tomb of Jesus, tread in his footsteps on the road to Calvary, before they earnestly and truly believed and understood what it meant : Christ has lived and Christ has died.

Only through these strong, emotional experiences Christ became for the Church an historical fact. The personality of Christ in his human life and suffering, faintly sketched by Augustine and only apprehended by the few, now stood out in vivid colours and became the property of all. And what they did not see with their own eyes they learned from Bernard of Clairvaux. He depicted the sufferings of Christ in language intelligible to all ; his life on earth, his poverty and his passion they thus realised, and, in realising these, they realised his divinity. St. Bernard

thus created a Christ-mysticism of which Augustine can have had but the faintest notion, and which now became the groundwork of all Western piety throughout the Roman Church: "To have part in Christ thou must have part in His *suffering*. For suffering is the essence of His being; by putting on His sufferings thou hast won Christ, thou hast put on Christ." Such was the practical, personal interpretation of the words: "Christ liveth in me"; the words which the mysticism of the Greek Church had made into a matter of speculation. In both Churches mysticism ensued; in both it led to renunciation, asceticism, ecstasy. Yet the two were as far apart as the East is from the West, and the difference lay particularly in their interpretation of these very words which were the starting-point of both. The Athos monk emptied himself of self that he might receive in himself the divine power of the incarnate Son of God, almost as if he were being infused with some natural power. The mystic of the Western Church, on the other hand, wanted union with Christ, because he desired to be one with Him in His human life. He desired to follow after Him in His humiliation, not by emptying himself of his personality, but rather by raising and confirming his personality on a new moral basis. This is active and ethical, as against passive and physical Christian mysticism. Active although in passive



form, in the highest activity of suffering. For they aspired at living over again the whole passion of Christ, and they were not satisfied until they had crucified the flesh, that they might also be exalted with Him. This exaltation could be won here on earth. To him who follows Christ in His poverty, who wearies himself in exercises and deeds of penitence, is vouchsafed even here on earth a moment's blissful tarrying in communion with the Saviour; a joy reserved for those who have watched with Him to the end. The penitent may kiss the feet of Jesus, the man of action may kiss His hands, but to His faithful ones He grants the third kiss, the kiss on the mouth of the bridegroom, the sweet, the stolen kiss, the *copula spiritualis* which is the heavenly reflection of the earthly marriage vow. "There is a place," says St. Bernard, "where God may be seen as He who abideth for ever: a place where He is neither teacher nor judge, but bridegroom; a place which is to me (whatever it be to others) as the bridal chamber which I am called to enter. But, alas! rare are those moments and of short duration."

This is real mysticism, because it is erotic. The same sentimental longing which we noticed in Persian mysticism now appears in Christianity also, and we find the chaste monk revelling in the Song of Solomon, which has been liberally included in the Holy Scriptures. St. Bernard's

masterful interpretation of the Canticles, the most original and best known of his writings, has become the pattern of a peculiar kind of mysticism which indulges in kisses and embraces far exceeding the limitations of Christian mysticism both in the Roman and the Protestant Churches. But just as the first falling in love of young people is a sign that they feel themselves no longer children but self-conscious persons, so the mysticism of St. Bernard is, as it were, the religious awakening of the individual, producing a most refreshing effect after all the vagueness and impersonality of former systems, and all the generalising properties of ancient Catholic mysticism.

This was the same subjective Christianity of which Augustine had struck the chord, but now it was transplanted into the life of the individual, in the fervour of a first passion in the youthful, impulsive desire for freedom.

How unaffected in the midst of the formal Latin of the Church sounds the avowal: For me at least—what others think I know not (" *Mihi quidem, nam de aliis nescio* ")! Yet St. Bernard possessed more than subjectiveness and feeling, just as he did not confine himself to the historical Christ. But so slowly grows the soul of the human race, so tenacious are the threads of history which bind it, that the new theory promulgated by the greatest genius of the time of the Crusades



got no further than the start. The fellow-suffering with Christ which he preached was in reality only a suffering in thought. With all his practical Christianity St. Bernard, when he reveals his innermost mind, is always a contemplative man, and his mysticism, well considered, flows out in intellectualism. His ardent love is, after all, only a means to reach the highest knowledge, needing the help of dialectics even where it far exceeds the limits of reason. Therefore the historical Christ is not enough for him. Just as the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures is infinitely beyond the sense of the actual words, so there is a spiritual Christ (the " Word " which was in the beginnning) of whom the historical Jesus is but the reflected image, and who is the aim and object of mystical speculation and contemplation. In this manner Greek philosophy triumphs over the exalted views of St. Bernard as it did over those of St. Augustine, Greek ideas and mannerisms appear again under the new form of religion, and St. Bernard's mysticism, notwithstanding its great girth, was easily made to fit into the system of Scholasticism, and presently became the peculiar type of speculation indulged in by the master-minds of the time, and of which we find specimens in the writings of Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas.

This amalgamation of mysticism and Scholasti-

cism was the easier accomplished as the pious and learned contemporary of St. Bernard, *Hugo a St. Victor*, experienced the same mystical emotions as the great Abbot of Clairvaux, and applied them to his Scholastic system. Hugo's mysticism is the scientific counterpart of that of St. Bernard. Possibly the young scholar, who wrote his first treatise during his novitiate in the German convent at Hamersleben (1115), put into words thoughts which he had gathered from St. Bernard's practical piety and applied to his own way of thinking. At any rate these two, starting from the same point, have produced a totally different result. St. Bernard converted living faith into practice, and he possessed the power of describing what took place in his innermost mind. Hugo, in whom also stirred the living faith, set to work to analyse it, with all the keen perception of an analytical philosopher.

The theory about the three stages of the condition of the mind, *cogitatio*, *meditatio*, and *contemplatio*,—which formed such an important factor in the mysticism of following ages,—although first promulgated by Hugo, is his most famous but not his best deed. It is, as a matter of fact, the practical scheme for expressing the psychological experiences which every mystic has to pass through.[1]

[1] *Cogitatio* is the conception of things through the senses; *meditatio* is the searching into the hidden meaning of the thing conceived; *contemplatio* is the insight which is thus obtained of the essence of things. Hugo popularised this theory by comparing it to three eyes: the eye of the flesh, the eye of the intellect, and the eye of the spirit. In the man who lives in sin the third eye is blinded, but to him in whom the Spirit of God dwells this eye is opened, and he sees heavenly things face to face.



More ingenious than this theory was Hugo's psychological definition of *faith*. He realised what in their zeal was overlooked by the great teachers in the Christian Church who after him and under his influence built up their systems, that in faith two things have to be specially noted. The one is *cognitio*, recognition (knowledge), that which is apprehended by faith; and the other is *affectus*, the condition of the believing soul. He pointed out and emphasised that real faith belongs to this latter condition, that it lies in the direction of the heart, while the apprehending of God is concerned with the *will*—"the more intense the affections, the more genuine and precious the faith." The *meritum* of faith lies in the direction of the will, in the turning away from the world to God, and the giving up of oneself to holy things. Therefore the Lord says to the woman of Canaan, who had little knowledge but great confidence: "Woman, great is thy faith." In this *affectus* lies the germ of Luther's "confidence" and Schleiermacher's "emotion," and the searching

cism was the easier accomplished as the pious and learned contemporary of St. Bernard, *Hugo a St. Victor*, experienced the same mystical emotions as the great Abbot of Clairvaux, and applied them to his Scholastic system. Hugo's mysticism is the scientific counterpart of that of St. Bernard. Possibly the young scholar, who wrote his first treatise during his novitiate in the German convent at Hamersleben (1115), put into words thoughts which he had gathered from St. Bernard's practical piety and applied to his own way of thinking. At any rate these two, starting from the same point, have produced a totally different result. St. Bernard converted living faith into practice, and he possessed the power of describing what took place in his innermost mind. Hugo, in whom also stirred the living faith, set to work to analyse it, with all the keen perception of an analytical philosopher.

The theory about the three stages of the condition of the mind, *cogitatio*, *meditatio*, and *contemplatio*,—which formed such an important factor in the mysticism of following ages,—although first promulgated by Hugo, is his most famous but not his best deed. It is, as a matter of fact, the practical scheme for expressing the psychological experiences which every mystic has to pass through.[1]

[1] *Cogitatio* is the conception of things through the senses; *meditatio* is the searching into the hidden meaning of the thing conceived; *contemplatio* is the insight which is thus obtained of the essence of things. Hugo popularised this theory by comparing it to three eyes: the eye of the flesh, the eye of the intellect, and the eye of the spirit. In the man who lives in sin the third eye is blinded, but to him in whom the Spirit of God dwells this eye is opened, and he sees heavenly things face to face.



More ingenious than this theory was Hugo's psychological definition of *faith*. He realised what in their zeal was overlooked by the great teachers in the Christian Church who after him and under his influence built up their systems, that in faith two things have to be specially noted. The one is *cognitio*, recognition (knowledge), that which is apprehended by faith; and the other is *affectus*, the condition of the believing soul. He pointed out and emphasised that real faith belongs to this latter condition, that it lies in the direction of the heart, while the apprehending of God is concerned with the *will*—"the more intense the affections, the more genuine and precious the faith." The *meritum* of faith lies in the direction of the will, in the turning away from the world to God, and the giving up of oneself to holy things. Therefore the Lord says to the woman of Canaan, who had little knowledge but great confidence: "Woman, great is thy faith." In this *affectus* lies the germ of Luther's "confidence" and Schleiermacher's "emotion," and the searching

into these psychological conditions has decidedly been one of the chief preparations for the Evangelical definition of what is Christianity. At first the seed did not bear much fruit; it was well nigh ground to powder in the great mill of Scholasticism. Hugo was eagerly admitted among the Fathers of the Church, but his analyses were only used as they fitted into their systems.

One can easily understand why these learned gentlemen made way for mysticism. It was for them the Mount of Transfiguration, where one might make tabernacles and tarry a while when weary of life. They did practically the same as the Hindu priests; they went as far as the division of the ways, where the "road of action" and "the road of knowledge" separate. The more a religion makes redemption dependent upon the fulfilment of duties—be they the duties of the priest at the altar, or of the layman in secular life—the greater will become the impetus to take refuge in self-absorption and contemplation. And when once a taste has been acquired for this higher accomplishment, one is apt to look down with scorn or compassion upon the man who still follows the road of action. The Hindus and the Persian Sufis held that there was a wide gulf fixed between this higher and lower kind of piety. But the Catholic Church formed one brotherhood, and their doctrine was one system. A bridge must therefore be laid between



the higher and the lower order, for even the smallest gift of the Church contains a spark of the Divine light. An amulet as well as deep meditation ensures this quiet rest of soul, and the grace which the sacraments impart is for priests and laity alike. But the priest has the advantage of being nearer to the source of light and life; he can dispense with many things which remain an imperative duty for the laity. By his penitential acts as monk he has performed more than ordinary lay duty, therefore he has a higher claim to the coveted "rest," and the art of contemplation which he understands gives him alone an entrance into the immediate joy of the Lord.

Scholasticism, then, is not only a doctrine teaching in what manner the gifts of grace are transmitted from the one to the many, from God to His creatures, but it also points out how the elect can find the way to God. And once again we are amazed at the large percentage of Platonism there is in the Roman Church, for the steps leading into the Holy of Holies have the same three gradations as in the Platonic scale of ascent: *purification*, *illumination*, and *union*.

These three steps have been Christianised by St. Bernard; he who ascends by them becomes one with Christ. The participation in the sufferings of Christ retains its appointed place as a necessary link in the order of redemption; it is

the *katharsis*, the being purified from all that separates man from God, and which formerly was effected by the sacrament of penitence. To believe in Christ is the highest enlightenment, the imitation of His life, the surest guide, the contemplative losing of self in the mystery of His incarnation, the deepest initiation into communion with God. And, finally, the result of this communion is the love of Christ, union with Him and eternal life.

The Scholastics, however, aspired at more than mere union with Christ. In the triune God Himself the soul desired to be absorbed, to be made one with God the Father Himself; this only makes its existence a true reality. Up to this point they reasoned just like the Hindus and the Greeks, but Scholasticism went a step farther. For it is not enough to be made one with God through apprehension, as the Greeks thought. Thomas Aquinas still adhered to that idea, but Duns Scotus, who considered the question from a more natural point of view, went farther than he. Absorption in God by apprehension, he says, can only be enjoyed by the few who are endowed with the highest spiritual gifts, and even by them only for a moment. If this union is really to be the object of human endeavour, and if it is to give lasting peace, it has to enter deeper into the soul. Then it requires the giving up of the will also. Only by giving up one's own will absolutely to the will of God, in order that



God's will may be accomplished in man, this merging of the soul in God can be completed. To this man can attain. It is wholly and entirely within his reach. It can even become a condition in which he permanently lives. And with this, Scholastic mysticism leaves the seclusion of the closet and steps forth into practical life; is, in fact, a harbinger of the coming Reformation. But long before this thought had assumed form and shape through much study and diligent inquiry, devout men in active life had lived it, it had made Christian heroes and heroines whose names are recorded in the annals of mysticism.

A friar, wishing to prove the pride of *Francis of Assisi*, asked him why all the people looked up to him, listened to him, and wanted to obey him. And Francis answered: desirest thou to know why they come to me, why all the world follows after me? I know, for the omniscient God has revealed it to me, He whose eyes are on the good and on the evil in all the earth. It is because His holy eyes have found nowhere a greater and more utterly depraved sinner than I am. Because in the whole world no more miserable creature could be found in whom to accomplish the great miracle that He intended to work. That is why He has chosen me to put to shame the great, and the noble, and mighty, the world of beauty and of wisdom.

And so the message which Christianity had

come to preach, that "all worth is worthless," had been delivered. The ideal, sketched by St. Augustine, to which St. Bernard had given colouring, had received life, had become a man of flesh and bone; barefooted he went by Italy's dusty highways, and all flocked round to see, to hear, to follow after him. The great and the noble and the strong, all that the world holds in esteem, had ceased to be of value; all is as naught to him, and riches may not even be mentioned. As for beauty and wisdom, the ideals of Greek philosophy, he disposes of them also. Even Biblical knowledge and priestly authority shrivel into nothing before this man, in whom the Gospel had become alive, and who obeyed the Church to the uttermost. Once a brother asked him if he might possess a Psalter. St. Francis replied: "Man can learn nothing but what he already knows. If to-day thou gettest a Psalter, to-morrow thou wilt want a Breviary, and thou wilt end by sitting in thy chair like any other prelate and saying, 'Hand me my Breviary.'"

There only remains the one thing that is needful: to become like Christ, to bear his sufferings, to lead his life of privation. If Christianity consisted in this literal and exaggerated imitation of Christ's life on earth, Francis of Assisi certainly carried it out to the extreme, and there would have been no need for any further development of Christian virtue.



Protestant Christianity set up another ideal, and tried to reach the goal by another way. But how could she ever have attained it, and who would have listened to her if in the Franciscan methods the Christian ideal of the Middle Ages had not been carried out to the uttermost and—found wanting?

The Spanish and Italian mendicant Orders had converted St. Bernard's *thinking* into *willing*, and this exerting of the will and the constant concentration of the mind upon the will remained for centuries a characteristic feature of the practical mysticism south of the Alps and Pyrenees. In the Franciscan form of devotion there were still traces of that holy longing which marks St. Bernard's love of Christ, and which is not only erotic, but full of actual pain and hunger to become one with Christ by the complete giving up of one's own self. This pathological state of mind breathes in the obscure and incoherent effusions of the Franciscan poet, *Jacopone de Todi*: "Amor, amor, Gesu desideroso!"

Love! Love! lovely Jesus!
Love, I will die
Embracing thee.
Sweet Love, Jesus my Bridegroom,
Love, Love, Jesus, thou Holy One,
Give me thyself, transform me into thyself;
Think, that I am in rapture,
That I have lost myself,
Jesus my hope,
Come, sleep in love!

In the writings of St. Francis himself there is nothing of this sickly effusiveness; yet he also experienced for a moment this highest form of rapture in the rock cave of Monte Alverno, where, as the legend says, when in an ecstasy of prayer he received the marks of the wounds of the Lord upon his own person and became as Christ. Unspeakable joy thrilled him, to make room a moment later for the stinging pain of the wounds. When the trance was past he saw on his person what had happened. His union with Christ was now complete. Both in body and in soul he now bore the likeness of the Crucified One.

In the hands of Francis of Assisi all things became facts. Even as his Jesus-mysticism is completed in his own flesh and blood, so the pantheism which lurks in all mysticism became in him such a lively consciousness of God's presence in nature, that he looked upon every creature, every animal and every plant, and even upon inanimate nature, as his familiar friend and brother. To him they are all God's children, and he sees God's glory in them. According to the legend, he tamed wolves as easily as the wild pigeons which flew into his lap, and it is not at all impossible to believe that, in defiance of the papal scorn, he actually did preach to the swine as the Holy Father is alleged to have commanded him to do.

Before leaving Mount St. Alverno, where he



spent such happy days and the most wonderful moments of his life, he bade farewell to all that grew and lived there—as did Sakuntala when she left the gazelles and mango trees of her solitudes. For all he has a parting word of greeting, for the trees and the flowers, the falcon—the "brother falcon"—which every morning at dawn flew into his cave to warn him that the hour of prayer had come. Even to the rock he speaks as to a friend: "Farewell, thou mountain of the Lord, thou holy mount where it has pleased God to dwell, farewell, Monte Alverno! God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost bless thee, abide in peace; we shall meet no more."

The intensity of his love of nature is most powerfully expressed in his "Hymn to the Sun," composed by St. Francis towards the close of his life in a sudden burst of inspiration. He sings God's praise for brother sun and sister moon, for mother earth and sister water and brother fire. For each of these his relatives he has a word: sister water is useful and humble, precious and chaste; while brother fire is beautiful and merry, strong and bold. But, before all, he thanks God for the sun, which by its brightness and majesty testifies to God's glory.

Here he touches the same chord which vibrates in Christ's words when He speaks of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. But for

St. Francis all creatures exist not merely for our reflection and consideration ; he includes them all in his intense, large-hearted Christian love, which places his love of nature almost on a level with the modern conception of it in its most comprehensive form. And for this reason it is but natural that this hymn should be revived in our day to express our latest mood. Renan calls it the finest psalm in existence, and Anatole France put it into French verse. And, however strange it may appear that the " Hymn of Praise " of Francis of Assisi should lend words to the lyre of Darwinism, yet there surely is a bond of union in the enthusiasm of the two. In both, relationship with nature is felt. For the modern mind this feeling is based on his knowledge of nature, on his insight into the organic connection of the world, and what he lacks in penetration he supplements by his theory about the unity and all-comprehensiveness of nature, a theory which has its root in Spinoza and natural pantheism. For St. Francis this relationship with nature was the natural bond of all created things in God ; a fraternisation of all reasonable and unreasonable creatures of God's hand. The idea of God underlying this conception, and which St. Francis, the practical, never clearly defined, distinctly reminds one of the all-embracing, all-quickening God of natural mysticism, the inheritance of the Scholasticism of the Areopagite ;



and so the pantheistic root is not lacking here either. It was quite in accordance with the piety emanating from St. Francis that the Scholastic Orders of mendicant friars—and especially the Dominicans—should give pantheistic mysticism such an important place in their system, and it seems but natural that the German Dominican Order, after freeing itself from the old system, plunged into a Christian mysticism which was permeated with pantheism.

# IX. GERMAN MYSTICISM

AMONG the many letters received by St. Bernard from far and near in the course of his stirring career, there is one which must have touched him very especially. It is from the noble lady Hildegarda, a nun in the convent of Rupertsberg, near Bingen. St. Bernard, being a man who went deep down to the root of things, must have read between the lines of the letter, written in bad Latin, what was the cause of Hildegarda's trouble. It is difficult to translate this epistle in modern language, nor can one quite get over this difficulty by leaving out some of the passages which defy translation. It runs somewhat as follows: "It has been revealed to me in spirit, Reverend Father, to address myself to thee; for special grace has been given thee to discern between the power of God and the sinful foolishness of the flesh: to thee who, in thy burning love for the Son of God, canst induce men to fight in the Christian army, under the banner of the Cross against the abomination of tyranny. To thee I must confess that I am bound in spirit concerning a vision which I





have seen in my innermost mind but not with my bodily eyes. I, most miserable creature,—and doubly miserable because I am a woman,—have from my childhood had great and wonderful visions, of things which I cannot put into words, except the Spirit of God gives the words into my mouth wherewith to express them. Kind and gentle Father, in thy goodness listen to me, thine unworthy handmaid, who has never known peace from her youth upward. From the experience of thine own piety and wisdom I beseech thee to understand me in thy spirit as the Holy Ghost shall teach thee. I can discern the inner meaning of the contents of the Psalter and of the Gospels and of the other books of the Bible. They are made clear to me in my visions; my heart is stirred and my spirit burns within me like a flame of fire, and I read the depth of the inner meaning, but I cannot read it in my own language, for I cannot read German. This much I can read in the simplicity of my heart without cavilling of words, because I am unlearned and have not been taught in any school. But internally, in my soul I have been taught, and from my soul I speak to thee, never doubting that thou wilt comfort me of thy wisdom and piety concerning the many disputes and differences which I am told there are in the world. . . . Two years ago I saw thee in a vision, gazing up into the sun;

fearless and bold. And I wept and blushed because I was afraid.

"Good and gentle Father, take pity on me; pray for me, for I am troubled concerning this vision, whether I ought to tell what I heard and saw. Often when I feel very miserable at the time that these revelations come to me, I have to lie down on my bed, because they take such hold of me that I cannot move. Therefore I now come to thee in my sore need, for I am easily shaken as a reed in the wind; my human nature is crushed within me, as it were in an oil-mill, for it is of the seed of Adam, and I am a wanderer in a strange world among the deceits of the devil. But now I have pulled myself together and flee to thee. And I say: thou also art easily bent and shaken, but thou hast the strength to straighten thyself again like a tree, and thou canst raise not only thyself but others also, to see salvation. Thou art as an eagle which looks into the sun. By the purity of the Father and of the Word, which is wonderful; by the gentle dew of the heart's desire, *i.e.* the Spirit of truth; by the sacred notes which ring throughout all creation, and by the Word itself by which the world was made; by the Majesty of the Father, Who of His infinite might sent down the Word into the womb of the Virgin, of whom He was made man, as honey is contained in wax, by these I entreat thee not to remain cold and



deaf to my supplications, but that thou wilt take my words to heart, and, when thou art in the spirit, beseech God for me, for He inclines His ear to thee. Farewell, fare thou well in thy soul, be strong in God in the fight! Amen."

The woman who pours out her soul in these passionate, incoherent phrases is one of those complex natures, strong and yet sickly, in whom the mystical notion of participating in the sufferings of Christ becomes a living reality. For, on German soil also, this was to be accomplished, and here women led the way. So we see that occasionally there is use for women. When the men have come to a deadlock in their learning, and their inner experiences have grown hard in the clutches of their Latin systems, then life seeks out the women, that they may live it. Mysticism found its women on the Rhine and the Scheldt. They transformed mysticism from an affair of the mind into an affair of the heart, into a well bubbling over with emotion, such as is only found in Germanic races, and preferably in their women. To the nuns of Germany and Flanders belongs the undisputed honour of having been the first to concencrate all their attention, their whole being, upon the love of Christ,—for long before St. Francis this movement had commenced,—and they opened a chapter in the history

of the Church, in which the Germanic nations were the leaders.

One other fact has to be mentioned about the Rhineland and Flemish nuns, with whom German mysticism originated, namely, that in our days they would probably all have been shut up in a lunatic asylum, or at least looked upon as demented. Even Hildegarda, with all her self-possession, has, as her letter tells us, her moments of mental aberration. When a trance seizes her she has to lie in bed and cannot speak or move. In the Middle Ages such attacks were not treated medicinally. The person thus afflicted was said to be "possessed," whether of the spirit of God or of the devil remained to be proved. Most often the judgment wavered towards leniency, as the history of the lives of the saints abundantly proves. The indulgence shown to these hysterical women may have been due to the fact that their visions and prophecies were often a power in the hands of the Church, or that they were under the patronage of influential religious systems or sects. Certain it is that the "possessed" were more often crowned as saints than burnt as witches. And this was to the advantage of the Church. The Catholic Church realised that it was wise to give full play to religious enthusiasm, even when it verged on madness, and with amazing forbearance she often allowed the billows of pious frenzy to rise and



break furiously against the ship of the Church, being well aware that the straight course is not always the best course, and that it would be possible, when weeding out the tares, to pluck up the wheat also.

If it was spiritual life which stirred in Hildegarda of Bingen, and Mechthilda of Magdeburg, in Elisabeth of Schönau, and Maria of Ognis, and all the rest of that sisterhood, it certainly was not life lived on straight lines. But all this took place in times when there was room for strong emotions, and in countries renowned for their piety. The Rhine districts, as well as Flanders, were in those days (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) so surfeited with nunneries that those regions were looked upon by the religious connoisseurs as Edens of bliss, Paradises of sanctity from which nothing but good could be expected.

This was fortunate for a little girl, Christine of St. Troud. Her historical renown commenced with her being carried into the church on a bier, and apparently dead. While the masses for the dead were being read, the child suddenly arose, and, swift as the wind, clambered up into the rafters of the building, where she balanced herself to the consternation of all present, and would not come down until the priest adjured her by the sacrament to do so. From that time forward Christine was always to be found on high places,

in the tops of trees or on mountain heights, on church towers and house roofs, and if any one attempted to bind her, she tore the bonds away. When a fit of frenzy overtook her, she would whirl round and round with such incredible rapidity that nothing of her could be distinguished, and when quiet again she would burst forth into wonderful singing, but the words of her song no one could interpret. It was whispered that she was a witch, but as she was otherwise good and tractable, and—fortunately for herself—in her moods of ecstatic rapture invoked Christ and not the devil, they let her be, until one day they dipped her into the holy water and kept her there so long that she was nearly drowned. This cured her both of her whirling and climbing, and she lived as a respectable nun to her seventy-fourth year.

In the ranks of mystical women Christine figured rather as a natural curiosity than as a saint, and Maria of Ognis was not behind her in this respect. Her nervous abnormality took the form of inexhaustible physical strength. She was impervious to cold ; in the severest frost she could sleep comfortably on the flagstones of the church. The gift of weeping she possessed above all other women. She could weep floods of tears, so that her long tresses and the ground on which she lay were soaked. But the effect on her was invigorating. Besides these strange physical



phenomena, we notice peculiar moral traits in her. Anything sinful or unclean put her into a passion of disgust. Once passing through a street in which there were houses of pleasure, she was ready to tear the skin off the soles of her feet because she had stepped in so unclean a place. Compassion she felt so strongly that it became physical suffering to her. When she nursed the sick she felt their pains in her own body. Her sympathy went deeper still. If she was in one of her ecstasies, and they were generally very deep, —once she was for thirty-five days without food, and the only words she uttered were : " I desire the body of the Lord,"—she could only be roused from her state of stupor by being told that a sick person needed her. Then she would tear herself out of her trance, sometimes with such force that she vomited blood.

A similar kind of exaggerated sensitiveness characterised Margareta of Ypern ; she was so great a man-hater that even the neighbourhood of a boy was painful to her—the negative result of a passionate affection, which was satisfied when she chose Christ for her bridegroom. She revelled in His beauty, and when she had partaken of the sacrament she preserved the taste of the host for a fortnight.

When Mechthilda of Magdeburg, the most noted of all these women, and a highly gifted lady of

noble birth, took to the religious life and retired from the world, she said: "I gazed on my dead body; it was heavily armed, and oppressed my soul with great physical power." To escape eternal death she thought she had to slay her body. Therefore she looked round for weapons wherewith to defend her soul, and found the pains and sufferings of Jesus Christ. "With these I defended my soul." The power which stimulated her she called "Love." Mechthilda is the first of these women who was mistress of the art which even a Hildegarda never mastered; she could read and write her mother tongue, and so accomplished was she in this respect that a man of high intellectual standing a hundred years later could write of her book that it was written in the most delightful German, and was the most touching love-story he had ever read in the German language.

"Love, thou hast taken from me worldly honour and riches," writes Mechthilda in looking back upon her life. "Would I had never known thee, for thou hast persecuted me, captured me, bound me and wounded me so deeply that I shall never recover of my hurt." But to God she at last yielded herself unreservedly, after much futile struggling. "Gentle God, what didst Thou see in me? Thou knowest that I am a poor creature: should not these things be given to the wise?"



Then the Lord was angry with her: "Art thou not mine? tell me."—"Yes, Lord, that is my desire.—"Shall I then not do with thee as it pleases me?"—"Yes, Beloved, even if it kill me."

Well might Mechthilda tremble, with the fear of the prophet Jeremias, at the work to which she was called. She, like he, had to announce the destruction of Jerusalem. Her name is recorded, together with the names of Hildegarda and Elisabeth of Schönau, of Catherine of Siena and Bridget, among the women who in sorrow and grief of heart prophesied against the Church, and predicted her tragic fall unless she altered her ways. Here again the women were at their post and did the right thing. They were not of the clergy, and could not enter into the many subterfuges with which the latter tried to cover up their many shortcomings; it was much the same then as it is now, the women got the better of the men. So little passive were they in their mysticism that they made of it a fruitless fight for a moral ideal. This ideal Mechthilda found in her fanatical love for Jesus. She became one with Him by "placing the desire of her heart in His divine heart." . . . "He, thy life, died for love of thee; let thy love for Him be so strong that thou canst die for Him. Then thou shalt burn for ever as a living spark in the fire of the Everlasting Majesty." How closely she touches here upon the Hindu notion of the

spark which sinks back into the fire of the Godhead, yet what a difference ! There the swallowing up of man into the impersonal universe ; here the heart's longing desire to rest in God's love. When she thinks of God she sees him as he appears to her in her trances, an effulgent light ; and so she calls her book "*The Effulgence of Divine Light.*"

Above the personal God is the impersonal Godhead. The way to Him leads through the humiliation of Christ, and the barrier can only be crossed by ecstatic rapture. There the inner sight which is given to the pious soul sees the eternal light, which is the spring and fountain from which all things flow. " The true blessing of God is as a stream in which the holy Trinity moves, and by which the soul lives." Thus the loving, musing women end in the same way as the speculative men who summarised their philosophy in a conception of God, which was pantheistic in its nature, and by which they entered into a relationship with God which made them equal to God.

The strong emotional experiences of the women of the age were not the only effects of mysticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were but as the violent vibrations of the compass needle, when the air is charged with electricity. Truly those times were pregnant with mysticism, and the life led behind the convent walls communicated itself in wider circles to the laity. The lay societies



and brotherhoods arising, partly in connection with the monastic orders, and partly as civil counterparts of these, were generally deeply tinged with mysticism, and this was particularly the case with the society of the so-called " Friends of God," which originated in Alsace. The name alone shows that their aim was intimacy. The name " friend " used in such circles suggests not only sectarianism, but also mysticism. Did not the Persian Sufi address the deity preferably as " the Friend," and what intensity of meaning has not John's Gospel given to the word "friend," where it says : " I call you not servants, but friends " !

To this mystical society belonged the worthy citizen Rulman Mersvin of Strassburg, whose house was a place of refuge for many " Friends of God." His book, *The Nine Rocks*, places him in the ranks of the mystical writers, beginning with the author of the Persian poem, the " Flight of the Birds " (see page 71), and stretching as far as John Bunyan and his *Pilgrim's Progress*. They all describe the various stages which the soul has to pass through, and the increasingly difficult obstacles which have to be surmounted before it can attain to perfection and meet with God.

In Southern Europe the Waldenses were the chief supporters of lay mysticism ; in the Netherlands we find it in the remarkable brotherhood

called the "*Brotherhood of Common Life.*" To their first head, *Gerhard de Groot* (*d.* 1384), they owe the two words which characterise the spiritual direction of common life. The one is the Socratic: "True knowledge is to know nothing." The other is the word he spoke on his death-bed: "Behold, I am called of the Lord; St. Augustine and St. Bernard knock at the door."

The fact that in the Catholic Church lay piety tended to mysticism is not surprising, considering that clerical piety inclined in the same direction, only in the latter case it was founded on *Scholasticism*, and fenced round by *Church* and *Hierarchy*. Where these three factors are absent, the mysticism that is left is not a miserable remnant, but the real jewel. Hitherto only a reflection of its radiance had fallen on the laity, while the clergy had the exclusive enjoyment of its full brilliancy. But now laymen were determined also to have their share; there was to be a wider circulation of the benefits which religion offered; and so here, towards the close of the Middle Ages, was repeated what took place in India when the military class exacted the right of practising asceticism, or when in the middle ages of the Indian Empire the lower castes also pressed forward and insisted on participating in the benefits springing from sacerdotal piety. The revolutionary tendency of this movement was most perceptible in the society called



"The Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit," which burst not only the ecclesiastical but also the moral bounds, and ended in pantheistic fanaticism.

Other really pious Christian sects became permeated with the same spirit of democracy. Mysticism became a general practice, whereas formerly it could only be indulged in under the auspices of the Church. The short duration and sad fate of these societies, however, proves effectually that Church organisation is not a superfluous element, at any rate not where mysticism is concerned, and that mysticism does not contain the elements for drawing people lastingly together. How good it would have been if these sympathetic friendly societies had become the basis of a Protestant lay-brotherhood, which in the place of the monastic orders could have perpetuated the goodly inheritance of monastic life, namely, self-renunciation, quietness of mind, charity. When the Reformation came, the day of all these societies was over, and no need was felt for again calling into existence anything that flavoured of monasticism.

Yet that generation of compassionate, self-denying, meditative people formed the background from which presently should step forth the three great Masters, the coryphei of German mysticism: Master Eckhart (*d.* 1327), Henry Suso (*d.* 1361), and John Tauler (*d.* 1361). In

them the fruit ripened which could hardly have come to maturity if it had not been nourished by the lives of thousands of pious souls; and to them it was permitted to finish the work, which assuredly would not have been the case if they had not been backed up by all those thousands.

Scarce seventy years ago Martensen taught that Eckhart was the greatest of the three, the "Patriarch of German Speculation"; the "Master of the whole School," "the one in whom mysticism is seen in striking originality." All this he is no longer to us. Father Denifle has satisfactorily proved that Eckhart's speculation was taken directly from the writings of Thomas of Aquinas, that it shows no breach with Scholasticism, but rather is carried on, on perfectly correct scholastic lines, more especially noticeable in Eckhart's Latin works. But for all that, it is not surprising that Martensen should single him out and extol him as the greatest of the three masters. For Eckhart—like the celebrated Bishop himself—was of a speculative turn of mind, to whom the philosophy in mysticism appealed most strongly. On this point, however, the German mystic had but little scope for originality, considering that so many others had already been exhaustively at work in this field before him.

The seventeen pages of quotations from Eckhart's sermons which form the groundwork of



Martensen's biography of him, still rank, in spite of what Preger and Denifle may say, as one of the finest expositions of this mystic's train of thought. From this we learn to what extent the lecturer of Cologne, who has always been looked upon as a pillar of the Church, was pantheistic in his views, and how closely he followed in the footsteps of the Areopagite and Erigena, so that his theology, compared with the teachings of St. Bernard and St. Victor, might almost be called a retrogression. God is before all things the pure essence of being. His most exalted name is the *I am*; He is the indiscriminate, the infinite, the "negation of finiteness." Here we certainly touch the beginning of German philosophy, for Hegel's philosophical nonsense about the *negation of the negative* had already been expressed by Eckhart. No wonder that Hegel was enthusiastic about him. Sometimes he calls God a Being, sometimes he says that He is not that, but that He is—can any one grasp it?—"disnaturalised Nature"! revealing itself as "Naturalised Nature" in the Trinity, the three Persons in which the Godhead comprehends and reveals itself. This is bad Platonism, after the manner of the Areopagite, and would be innocent and amusing enough if it did not entail the consequence that God is not good, that I need not be grateful to God for His love because He only acts by internal compulsion;

that God loves nothing outside of Himself, and that all His love is absorbed in Himself; that God can no more do without us than we can do without Him, and so on. From such puerile Christian principles, pure natural mysticism is deduced: All creatures aim at becoming like God. If God were not in all things there would be no operative power, no desire in nature . . . if a man were thirsty, he would not drink unless there was a divine element in what he drank. And so we go on until we reach the unity of God and the soul, which the Persians—and the Hindu mystics in our day—express by the symbol of the sun and the mirror, and which means that man is born of God, and God in man. . . . "It is the Father's nature to beget the Son, and it is the Son's nature to be born, and that I should be born in Him; likewise it is the Spirit's nature that I should be consumed in Him, and be transformed into pure love." God has become man, that I might become God. God has died that I might die unto the world and all that is therein.

All the same, Eckhart would probably not have been accused of heresy if *all* that he taught had been taken directly from St. Thomas. As it was, he would scarcely have escaped the stake had any other but the Order of the Dominican friars sat in judgment upon him. The remarkable part of his teaching is that this pantheistic fatalism, which



for the orthodox Fathers of the Church was merely intellectual recreation, was for Eckhart a matter of vital importance and practical reality. For if it be true that God is so near to us that He is in the water that we drink, why then all this circumlocution when we want to draw near to God? What need is there of Church ceremonies? Why should penances and sacraments be the only way by which the Church can approach God? In other words, is the gulf between the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of nature—which Scholasticism preached and on which the Church trades—really as great as is maintained? Or, indeed, is there any gulf at all? If God is in all things, then grace is everywhere in nature; what need, then, of priestly mediation and sacramental apparatus? Such was the startling conclusion which Eckhart sprang upon the Church, however guardedly he expressed it, and when it came to the ears of the authorities the lecturer was called to account, and made to recall his words. He had drawn the same conclusion which Hindus and Persians had drawn before him: why walk any longer on the road of action, after we have found the way of apprehension? What further need of message or messenger when I can safely rest on the Sultan's breast?

Yet another conclusion Eckhart drew from his speculative theology. If the essence of God's being is constantly to be the subject of our medita-

tion, why not also the essence of our own being? If with God all is internal, why should with men all be external. Why external deeds, external confession, external sanctification? Here Eckhart becomes evangelical and positive in his teaching. In considering man's duty he lays the full stress on the inner habitus of men, on his abiding condition, his "*Seelengrund*," as he calls it. It is there that the new Adam must be born; there we must realise what we are. The question is not what one *does*, but what one *is*. Here is a specimen of his way of thinking:—

"We should not think so much of what we do as of what we are. If we be good and wise, our works also will be well and wisely done. If thou art righteous, thy deeds also will be righteous. Thy deeds do not sanctify thee, but thou must sanctify thy deeds. However good thy deeds may be, if thou be not good, thy good deeds will profit thee nothing. If thou be holy, thy holiness will sanctify all thy doings, thine eating and thy drinking, thy sleeping and thy waking. Therefore strive diligently to be good; it matters not whether thy deeds be many or few, all that matters is the motive from which they proceed."

Words like these were the precursors of the Reformation, and they were spoken in such plain German, and with such power and simplicity, that they could be understood and remembered.



And so much impression did they make, that although two hundred years elapsed before Luther's voice was heard, yet they were not forgotten, and the people who knew no better thought they were the words of Luther himself.

The minnesinger, Henry Suso of Constance, who sang of the love of Jesus, had sat under Eckhart's pulpit. What he there received as *thought* he converted into feeling, into a life of self-surrender which was no less full of suffering, no less full of intense longing, than the life of Francis of Assisi had been, but there was not the same heroic love for his neighbour, nor the same consecration to the service of humanity. He was of a highly nervous temperament which he inherited from his mother, whom he so deeply venerated that he renounced his noble ancestral name and adopted hers, Suso (Seuse). He fell into a state of religious amorousness, the chief object of which was Jesus, but sometimes he included the Madonna also. His life was a direct result of the fanatical system of self-renunciation introduced by Hildegarda and Mechthilda, and his meditations were a deeper acceptation of the doctrines of Eckhart. At the age of eighteen Suso decided whom he would serve, and also saw clearly that the walls of the lusts of the flesh which separated him from his Beloved had to be pulled down with might and main. It was not enough to wear the hair shirt and the iron chain,

no, he must have an under-garment with pointed nails driven into it, and at night the nails vied with the vermin in tormenting him and keeping him awake. In order not to be inhospitable towards these nocturnal tormentors, he had his hands bound to his sides, or wore gloves fitted with brass nails. Day and night he bore on his bare back a cross with protruding iron nails, the points of which ran into his flesh. For ten years he thus fought to keep under the natural man, until his body was one mass of sores and wounds, and he was utterly emaciated and unnerved. Then at last he gave way. With all these horrible penitential exercises Suso wished to show that his devotion to Christ was absolute. Love must conquer in him; his young, fiery heart could not subsist without love. One day the thought came to him that he must make upon himself a visible and lasting sign of his blessed union with Jesus. He seized a style, and with it scratched the name of Jesus into the flesh near to his heart. The blood oozed out of the deep incisions, and with joy he contemplated the scarlet stream of love, and counted the suffering as naught. Thus bleeding, he left his cell and went into the chancel, and kneeling before the crucifix: "Lord, I pray Thee," he said, "to press Thyself ever deeper into my heart, that Thy holy name may be branded in me so that Thou canst never more depart from me."



Thus he made a sort of compact with him to whom he had consecrated all the love of his youth. And this sacrifice of suffering was not made in vain. His words breathe an intimacy of love which lend them a persuasive charm greater than that of Eckhart, especially where he speaks his own thoughts and not merely interprets those of his master. He learned by his own experience, and showed in his own actions that the way to wisdom does not lie in philosophic reasonings, but in living. He believed not in any knowledge of God that was not gained by following after Christ in his human life. And in this Suso differed from Eckhart, as is evident from his protesting on this very point against the "Freethinkers." He will have nothing to do with their pantheistic doctrines, whereas Eckhart in many points agrees with them. The Freethinkers even appealed to the lector of Cologne when they were brought before the council, and in this appeal they were justified. It proves that the dictates of the mind may lead to anywhere, but not so the dictates of the heart. These latter Suso followed in his self-imposed martyrdom, which to us appears so strange. To him this was the way of self-examination, of proving the spirits, and for his theology the crucible in which the metaphysical relation to God was evaporated and only the personal intimacy remained behind. Therefore where his reasoning is

genuine,—and it is so in the " Book of Wisdom,"—there is in this conception of the highest a personal element and a positive fulness, which Eckhart never reached. To Suso's mind Wisdom was not an abstract philosophical truth, but the noble maiden beloved of the Jewish sage, " whom he delighted in from his youth, whom he would bring home as his bride, because he loved her. The wisdom which in the beginning of time was with God the Creator, and rejoiced always before him." Words like these from the Book of Wisdom and the Proverbs of Solomon had roused Suso's love for Wisdom. Wisdom became his beloved, " the eternal Word which is in the bosom of the Father, on whom the Father's eye delights to rest in the love of the Holy Ghost." I am the seat of love ; my eyes are pure, my mouth is sweet, and my form beautiful, wonderfully clothed in fine raiment, delicately decked with the colours of living flowers. The angels love to gaze upon me. Blessed is he who, led by my hand, shall join in the sweet delights of the joyful dance in the kingdom of heaven. One word from my sweet lips is better than the song of angels, than the music of the harp. I sway hither and thither to the rhythm of the dance music ; in me is nothing that displeases, in me all desire of heart and soul is satisfied."

This Greco-Jewish genius of Wisdom, with whom Suso is in love, was in the early Christian Church



identified with Christ, and Suso admits that only to the uninitiated, to those who have yet to be attracted and brought in, Wisdom presents herself in this womanly form, But he who has been won, who is initiated, knows that Wisdom is Christ, as Paul said that he desired to know nothing " but Christ and him crucified." The sufferings of Christ, this is true wisdom ; when one has personally experienced what it is to be one with Christ in his sufferings, one knows all that is worth knowing, and there is nothing besides that men need learn to know.

Therefore, to obtain Wisdom we must walk in the path in which Christ walked : only by my sufferings, he said, the world can be redeemed, only thus can I prove my love and soften the stony hearts of men. Fear not then to follow after me in my sufferings. To him in whom God dwells, suffering is made easy. But by suffering—and here is the point at which the Catholic Church diverges—men cannot *earn* salvation. Well considered, suffering has only the psychological merit of preparing the soul for the higher life, by subjugating the flesh and crushing one's selfwill. Then follows that condition which is essential, a condition of readiness and resignation, in which man with entire self-surrender sinks his own littleness in the greatness of the atonement of Christ. This is the salvation from all times dear to mysticism, but now proclaimed to the world as the

secret of Christian life, and publicly preached as the duty and the right of the laity, in clear and intelligible words. Suso speaks of being unclothed —clothed upon—and overclothed: unclothed of all creature attributes, clothed upon with Christ, and overclothed in the Godhead. "To become as nothing is the delight of the truly resigned man; the putting off of self is the putting on of truth." And yet one other word, which puts the stamp of mysticism upon the whole: "The wholly resigned man sees in the light (of grace) the presence of the all-pervading Divine Being in himself."[1] This kind of language has saved Suso from being forgotten, and has made him to this day a power both in Catholic and Protestant Christendom in Germany. Well known also is his play upon words: "When love is with love, love knows not how loved love is, but when love parts from love then love knows how loved love is." Here Suso is in his element; of the pain of love and the love of pain he has spoken and sung as no man has done after him, until Werther appeared and Heine wrote his sonnets. His idea of piety may be summarised in the four words, intimacy, purity, entirety, consummation. The external picture, however, which Suso presents to our view places him at a greater distance from us. We think of him as the martyred cross-bearer and Virgin-worshipper, singing his love-songs before her

[1] Preger, ii. p. 402.



image, as does the "foolish lover" under his lady's window; and the Protestant tenor of his thoughts is often lost sight of in the Catholic setting which colours his language.

In the third of the three great masters, Dr. John Tauler (1300–61), German mysticism gained what it was in want of, a practical man, who, although monk, priest, and poet, yet possessed none of the attributes of the monk-professor, like Eckhart, or the monk-poet, like Suso. Tauler was an undaunted preacher and pastor, and experienced many vicissitudes in consequence. In 1324 Ludwig of Bavaria quarrelled with the Pope John XXII.; the Emperor deposed the Pope, and the Pope deposed the Emperor, excommunicated him, and put his lands under the papal ban. The respect for the papal interdict was not great in those days, and the Dominicans of Strassburg, at whose college Tauler was lector, went on reading masses for several years without taking any notice of the prohibition. When in the end they sided with the Pope, the Emperor drove them out of the city, and it appears that on this occasion Tauler with several others fled to Basel, where he soon became the centre and mainstay of the faithful flock and the other fugitives who had taken shelter in this city. Afterwards he returned to Strassburg, and ministered to the needs of the people according to his own light and conviction, and not according

to any clerical or imperial dictate. He suffered much for truth's sake, but these persecutions only confirmed him in the way of truth, and he helped others to walk in the same path.

He found the truth after he had been admitted into the Society of the " Friends of God " at Basel. It is told as a fact—but it may be only a legend—that a " Friend of God " from the Oberland suddenly appeared before Tauler, God having called him three times to go and convert to the true light the already celebrated preacher. In Basel Tauler worked side by side with Henry of Nördlingen, and this remarkable man, the friend of all mystics, gathered friends of God from far and near round Tauler and himself. He also took his friend into other religious circles of the same persuasion; for instance, he introduced him to the nun Margaret of Ebner. In Strassburg Tauler became the father confessor of Rulman Mersvin, and pastor to the whole Society of the " Friends of God," who used to hold their meetings at the house of this highly respected citizen. Thus he had the joy of ministering and being ministered to, and he devoted his energies to binding the individual members of the society into a small community based on pure and deep convictions, and of which he was the leading power.

His sermons are very different from those of either Eckhart or Suso. They are neither philo-



sophical expositions nor spiritual effusions, but merely personal addresses, whether they contain fatherly advice or severe reproof. He preached with tremendous power. Margaret of Ebner declared that his fiery words had set the world aflame. And his words must indeed have been burning and scorching, judging from the manner in which he attacked his contemporaries, inveighing against the wickedness of the clergy as well as of the laity, and taking no account of their virtues. In their deeds of piety he sees only " an ostentatious show," based on love of self and vanity, and leading to nowhere; God will have none of these. He does not mince matters, but stigmatises all Catholic righteousness as pure Pharisaism, as hostile to true Christianity as the Pharisees were to Christ. We may be sure that the Pharisees of Basel and Strassburg, after listening to such sentiments, did not strew roses on Tauler's path. Nor did this bold preacher spare the monastic state to which he once himself belonged: " Had I known when I still was my father's son, what now I know, I would have lived of his inheritance and not as a mendicant." If he had not become a priest—he says elsewhere—he would not have scorned to be a shoemaker, making good shoes. " And if a man has wife and child to keep, and his trade is to make shoes, and he be a God-fearing man, let him stick to his last and support his wife and children. And

if other poor people leave the village to try and earn their living in a more exalted field of labour, it may happen that they who stay at home fare infinitely better in simply following their calling, than those very clever people who neglect the business to which they were born. I know of one, a friend of the Most High God, who for more than forty years has been a farmer, and still is. Once he asked of the Lord whether he should give it up and enter the Church. And the Lord answered him : No, eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow, and thereby honour me."

His practical common sense guided Tauler in the choice of the articles of his belief. In this he was no inventive genius. He based his theories on Eckhart, and does not hesitate to borrow freely from Suso, Mechthilda, and others. But, being a practical man, he had learnt by experience what to treasure and what to reject. Children, he says, ask not for great and high things, be simple-minded, be content to learn to know yourselves in your mind and your nature, and inquire not into the mysteries of God, of His flowing out and flowing in, of what is and what is not, and of the spark sinking into nothingness. For Jesus has said : " It is not for you to know the mysteries of God." Therefore we must hold fast to the true, entire, and simple faith that there is one God, in three Persons, and that in Him is no multiplicity, but unity.



Tauler, the same as all the divines of Eckhart's school, exhorts his hearers to examine themselves, to look into their souls, " for in our soul we bear the image of God, there God dwells, there God delights to see Himself." The privilege of man above all created beings is that, while nature can but reflect the Divine Image, the image of God in man is part of God Himself, and man's life work is to be conformed more and more to that image. When speaking of these things, Tauler is always careful not to let his definitions suggest pantheism. He preserves to the best of his ability the personal character of God and of men. Even when in spite of his own warning he indulges in reveries about the silence, the solitariness, the unfathomableness, and the inertness of God, he knows but too well that as Father, *i.e.* as the revealed God, as a Divine Personality, God is before all things, life, and activity, and will ; the power by which all things are sustained, renewed, and invigorated. And he also knows that man cannot of himself implant into his soul the Divine Image, nor conform himself to it. He knows that the fall of man stands between man and his better self. This stands out as one of the cardinal points in Tauler's theology, and also that this obstacle was done away with on Golgotha, and that only through Christ and by grace man can be saved and become himself

again. To this positively Christian doctrine Tauler faithfully adheres, and he administers it in pure, evangelical form. This dogmatism also leads him to look upon life as a practical school. Grace gives us the will and the energy to work, for " It is God who fulfils in us both to will and to do." And thus in newness of life man goes forth in the strength of his original liberty, with the full use of all his faculties. For " we are created and called to great things " ; therefore we must make room for God in our hearts, that we may have strength to perform the same.

With Tauler, mysticism was turned towards ordinary human life ; and this had a remarkably beneficial effect, especially when comparing it with the effects produced by the mysticism of his contemporary, Suso.

In other places also Christian mysticism was bearing practical fruit, in the form of sound advice and the fostering of good, common-sense ideals. Thomas à Kempis, with his celebrated book, *The Imitation of Christ*, coming about a century after Tauler, speaks to the same effect, but in a gentler, softer voice, without any of the clamorous polemics and the clenched-fist method of the reformer Tauler. This edifying work—after the Bible the widest-read book in Christendom—originated a lay mysticism which has become the favourite type in Catholicism, reaping



everywhere the most beautiful and healthiest results, and also finding a wide entrance in the Protestant world.

To live a life of inner quietness and peace ; listening to the voice of God, ever mindful of Christ's great meekness in single-hearted purity and in the perfect liberty of perfect resignation—is what Thomas à Kempis urges upon Christian men ; and who shall deny the desirability and the profitableness of a Christianity which brings into prominence the " four things which bring much peace " : 1. Seek rather to please another than thyself ; 2. Desire rather to have little than much ; 3. Choose rather the lowest than the highest room ; 4. Pray always that God's will may be fulfilled in thee and by thee ?

Tauler's manly call to " great things " we seek in vain in Thomas à Kempis. He prefers to dwell on the patient and the quietly abiding side of Christian life, and this best suits the demands of Catholicism. But the feeling of one's own unworthiness is not only a fruit of Christian morality, it is also a fruit of mysticism, the same here as in Persia, where meekness, patience, moderation, and self-sacrifice are the basis of the moral code of Sufism. We have seen what has been the fate of this law in practical life in Persia, how easily it could be evaded, and how quickly the people degenerated into doing the

very opposite. It has been of infinite benefit for Christian mysticism that its ideals were bound up in Christ, and required the following in his footsteps. Thus it obtained an absolute and lasting stability which neither the egotism nor the contempt of men could belittle or exaggerate, as has been the case with all mysticism not built on this foundation.

## X. LUTHER'S MYSTICISM

In 1516 Martin Luther published a little book, the manuscript of which had accidentally fallen into his hands. It had moved him so much that he began by making extracts out of it for the edification of his friends, and afterwards published it in book form. As there was no title to it, he called it the *Theologia Germanica*, by which name it is still known. After two years a second edition was needed, and the preface which the young Wittenberg professor wrote for the first edition was retained for the second, although in the meantime the professor had become a Reformer. The preface is to the following effect :—

This noble little book, though poor in words of human wisdom, is all the richer and the more precious in its expression of piety and godly wisdom. I glory in my ignorance that, apart from the Bible and St. Augustine, I have never come across a book from which I have learned so much about God, Christ, man, and all things. And though the learned theologians of Wittenberg scoff at it, we will yet take this new thing to heart,

for nothing like it has ever been revealed before. nay, to be correct, it has been revealed before, but God, in his anger over our sins, considered us not worthy to hear and to understand the " good news."

Thus warmly, in the earlier days of his spiritual awakening, could Luther speak of this book, which after all is only a simple manual of devotion, after the mannner of late-German mysticism. In those days mysticism, in the form given to it by Tauler, was for Luther the essence of theological wisdom. Of course mysticism in one form and another had always been familiar to him, for he was a theologian, brought up in the school of Scholasticism, and in the beginning of his university career he even had recourse to the philosophy of the Areopagite to explain the meaning of David's "*Praise of the silent,*" and such-like passages. He knew as well as any mystic of the school of St. Bernard or Thomas à Kempis that there is a knowledge of God which can only be found in perfect peace and quietness of mind, or as it were in a trance or ecstasy. When afterwards he came to condemn this kind of mysticism, he could add his *expertus loquor* ; he could speak as a man of experience.

Tauler's mysticism, however, he never condemned ; it had been his comfort and strength during the time of his terrible internal struggle, and it expressed what was raging in his own bosom.



For, in the case of Luther, the new light which was revealed by him was not the result of his own or other people's meditations, it was a life experience for which he had staked his own personality. He staked all, not only heart and soul and mind, but also his life ; all, that he might obtain " the grace of God that bringeth salvation." He carried out Catholicism into its furthest consequences in his own body. He would fulfil the will of God to the last iota. And so it happened to him, as it happens in fairy tales and sometimes in real life, that he who stakes all, gains the kingdom. The young monk, who had wagered life and health on God's righteousness, did not destroy himself, but he destroyed the interpretation of God's righteousness which was the life of Catholicism, and with which for centuries the people had been disciplined and their souls tortured. Suddenly as by a revelation he saw that the righteousness of God declared in the gospel is not harshness, but mercy, and that it cannot be gained by penances, but by faith alone, as it is written : " The righteous shall live by faith." Together with the Latin tongue, Roman law had slipped into the Church to interpret God's character and man's relation towards God. How much had not Luther to suffer before he could find behind the hard cold word *justitia* the mercy of God of which the prophets of Judaism had spoken, and which was the burden of Paul's preaching. Now, looking at

it from the Greek point of view, and knowing the Hebrew underlying it, he realised the meaning of Rom. i. 17, where it says that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. Suddenly this word, which formerly had meant to him utter condemnation, now became an overwhelming blessing; he realised that law and gospel were not synonymous, but that by the "glad tidings" the condemnation of the law was done away with. Can one blame Luther that henceforth he clung to the words of the Gospel and to the letter of the Bible, and by it tested his own faith, and the faith of all Christian people, seeing what a help they had been to him in fighting against the traditions, interpretations, and systems which had oppressed and bound his soul?

The new conception of God, as the Heavenly Father of the Gospel, led at once to a new relationship to God, the childlike faith of the Gospel, the fearless trust of the child in his Father. The cardinal truth brought out in the Reformation, that faith is "confidence" (*fiducia*), had a twofold development: trust *in* God—not fear *of* God; trust in *God*—therefore not trust in *self*, *i.e.* not confidence that one can work out one's own salvation. As long as a man believes that he can be saved by works he does not believe in God, and needs neither God nor Saviour. No, God desires man wholly, and man needs God wholly; for of himself he can do



nothing. To live life, we should say in modern language, means to rely implicitly on the sustaining force of life. Life is eternal; we either have it or we have it not. It is not a patchwork that we can piece together as time and opportunity permit, even if we gave up all our time and all our opportunities to it.

And Luther's language is not so very different from ours. The equation, *justificatio=vivificatio* (justification is making alive), expresses that a new principle of life, a new vitality, animates and fills the believer, that is, the man who puts his trust in God. In this light we understand those words of Luther's which have also been quoted by the eminent American psychologist, William James, in his *Commentary on Galatians*, chapter iii.: God is the God of the sorrowing, the poor, the miserable, the oppressed, the despairing, the altogether worthless. On them God can exercise His great natural power, which is to exalt the humble, to feed the hungry, to give sight to the blind, to comfort the poor and the needy, to pardon the sinner, to raise the dead, and bring salvation to them that are without hope. For He is an omnipotent Creator, He can make alive from the dead, and call that which is not as though it were. Self-conceit and self-righteousness are the monsters which stand in the way of the accomplishment of this work of God. For it is not His

will that any should sin or be unclean or miserable or condemned, but that all should be justified and made holy. Therefore our Lord God is bound to take up the strong and mighty hammer of the law, to grind to powder this monster, with all the things in which it trusts, presumption, wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and power, that these may all be as naught, and man may learn at last through loss and misfortune, and realise in his innermost soul that he is really lost and condemned.

When a man has been thus frightened and cast down to the ground by the word of the law, then it is no easy matter for him to stand up and to say: Moses and his law has long enough vexed and troubled, afflicted and distressed me, it is now time for grace to do its work in me, and to listen to what the Lord Christ has to say to me, in whose lips grace is poured (Ps. xlv. 3), and who speaks therefore more eloquently than Moses, who is slow of speech and of a slow tongue (Ex. iv. 10). Now it is time for me to look not to Mount Sinai which burns with fire, but to Mount Moriah, the city of the living God, wherein is his Temple, and his Mercy-seat, which is Christ, the King of Righteousness and Peace. There will I listen to what the Lord shall say unto me; for there "He speaks peace to his people."

"It seems hard and vexatious to us that a man, after having been sorely tried in spirit, should only have to turn away from Moses and the law, and take hold of Christ by the word of grace. For man's heart is a foolish and deceitful thing. After fighting so hard, and torturing our conscience with the law, we do not care to accept the gospel of Christ wherein is the free gift of pardon and forgiveness of sins. We rather prefer to seek out some further bonds and restrictions to equalise matters, and argue in this way: If it be God's will to prolong my life, I promise to lead a better life, I will do this and the other, I will go into a convent, live in chastity, drink only water, eat only bread, go barefooted, and so on. If a man does these things and not at the same time does something else, *i.e.* throw over Moses and his commandments and leave these to the fearless, the hard, and the stiff-necked, and in his misery and distress does not clutch hold of the Lord Christ, who suffered and was crucified and died for him, then it is all up with his salvation, then he is doomed to despair and eternal punishment."



These strong centripetal words James refers to with the more pleasure because in a Christian form they typify the kind of conversion which he himself considers the only really religious form of it. Conversion is a total transformation in which the principle of life is changed (or for the first time found). The converted person no

longer seeks the centre of gravity of his life in his own self, but places it in the life-giving power to whom he has been converted. In the noblest form of conversion, this emptying of self creates not only a feeling of relief and freedom, but also of enlargement and of renewed activity. Conversion brings gladness and energy and sympathy, and the desire to make others glad and to be actively employed for them.

To Luther conversion means all this, and it shows him wherein lies the difference between religion and morality. Morality as the way to enter into relationship with God has lost its meaning, but it has recovered its meaning as the natural guide of human life, and as such it now occupies its proper place in the life that is consecrated to God. Duty is not a service we render to God, or a thing by which we can merit anything from God. It is merely the natural obligation which the free man owes to himself and to his neighbour, and it is therefore the fulfilment of God's will. When a man once realises God's fatherly love, he will also understand what brotherly love is. He who is a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, also fulfils his duty as citizen of the earth. On this ground Luther is unwearying in his exhortations to activity. Take up your work cheerfully, he says in his Manual of Morning Devotions, in whatever sphere of action your work may lie,



even if it be that of the maid who sweeps the room. Do it with all your strength and all your might, and let your heart rejoice that it is God's pleasure and God's intention that you should render Him such profitable service, instead of inflicting upon yourself the profitless hardships of monasticism. Should not our heart leap for joy and gladness when going forth to our labour or when doing the things that we are commanded to do? Should we not say in our hearts "surely this is better than all sham sanctity, better than fasting and praying on our knees? For we have the sure witness in God's Word that this is according to His will, but of the other not a word has been told us" (Larger Catechism, 3, iv. Comm.).

It is a grievous mistake (which is often made) to think that the great Reformer, by preaching "salvation through faith alone," called the people away from their work. Ritualistic and penitential exercises, and all works done as a means whereby to secure sanctification and salvation, he emphatically rejects, but the performance of the ordinary work and duties of daily life he strongly upholds, and indeed he is the first, since apostolic days, to raise these again to their full value, perhaps even giving them a higher value than the apostles ever did, in their connection with Christian life.

Now what have all these reflections of Luther

to do with mysticism? Albrecht Ritschl and his school say: very little indeed. In his zeal to represent Luther's theology in its purest form and in strongest contrast to Catholicism—and perhaps also influenced by his personal antipathy to mysticism—Ritschl made out that Luther's connection with the mysticism of the Middle Ages was of very slight importance. "He found the gospel quite independently of mysticism," he says, "and it was only during the time previous to his classical period that he was fully taken up with mystical notions." Quite true! but it is also a fact that long after his first appearance as reformer, Luther still felt his connection with mysticism very strongly. The wording of his preface (1618) proves this. There the young Reformer claims that the things for which he is now upbraided are the very same things which the old mystics preached. And how highly he speaks of Tauler!

There is yet a closer association between Luther and ancient mysticism beyond the mere fact of his finding there the same chord struck which vibrated in his own bosom. The first ray of hope which fell into his soul, and led his thoughts into another channel, had been, as it were, a voice from ancient mystic days. What might not have become of the Augustinian friar in his internal struggle, in the convent of Erfurt, if the Provincial of his



Order, John Staupitz, had not taken him by the hand, and showed him, to the best of his knowledge, what Christianity was. This knowledge of Staupitz, however, was mysticism, and he was no mere amateur on the subject. He was a learned and cultured scholar, and his theological works were a direct continuation of Eckhart's and Tauler's mysticism. Through him Luther was drawn into a kind of speculative piety, which he helped his master to consolidate.

It cannot be denied that the type of faith which Luther created was foreshadowed by the "resignation" (*gelassenheit*) of mysticism. For "*gelassenheit*" was understood to mean the absolute giving up of personal motives, the complete surrender of self to God's will, and the becoming merely a recipient of divine grace. This was the psychological framework in which "the justification by faith" was set; and this is not a creation of German mysticism alone, but of all mysticism, as sure as all mystics, heathen and Christian alike, agreed in rejecting the road of "deeds," be they ritualistic or moral deeds, for bringing about this relationship with God. But at this point ends Luther's connection with the mystics; for he rejects not only what they rejected, the road of "deeds," but also that what they created, the road of "apprehension." And even with regard to the first, the rejection of

" deeds," he set to work far more earnestly than the mystics had done. For these had always kept a small reserve of " deeds " for use on the way to salvation, namely, " purification," which must take place before the heart could open to meet God and become one with him ; the kind of purification which as a rule implied suffering, and which led Suso into a condition of asceticism far more severe than the strictest monastic regulations would ever have sanctioned.

This working-of-oneself-up through suffering into a state of resignation, this moral-pathological method of preparation, Luther rejected emphatically. The deeds which God requires of man are something quite different from this fighting to enter into relationship with God.

The inner way created by mysticism for attaining to this relationship, the road of apprehension, of contemplation, Luther scorned as much as he did the road of external deeds. His " confidence " had nothing in common with contemplative religion, and just as he exploded the divine attribute on which Catholicism lived, *i.e.* justice, so he also shattered the divine image set up by Scholasticism, *i.e.* the intellectual definition of God, whether representing God as comprehensible or incomprehensible.

" Speculatively they define God by certain comparisons, as an existing centre of a non-existing



circle. But these are mathematical and physical problems which we can leave to other professors. For we want a theological definition, that is to say, not a definition of the Divine Being which is incomprehensible, but a definition of his will and affection, of what pleases him and what does not. It is the interest of religion to have a God on whose help we may rely in time of trouble, and who will further us in all that is good. We cannot know the least thing of ourselves, yet in the devil's name we try to climb up and with our intellect to grasp God in his Majesty, and to speculate upon what he is . . . Turk and Jew and Pope all say : I believe in God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and they all seek by a different way to find God in heaven, and find Him not,f or He will not be found except in Christ." [1]

Arguing in this manner, not much remains of the imaginary God and the imaginary relationship to God, which has been the life of mysticism ; still less of the unconscious God and the unconscious relationship towards God, the pagan-mystical origin of which is easily recognised. Together with *intelligence* and *ecstasy*, *asceticism* also vanishes, that last remnant of the mystic inheritance cherished by the mystics of all ages. All that remains is the *inner life* in God and the

[1] Schultz, " Luther's Dogmatische Aussagen über Gott " (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, p. 79 and foll. 1881).

*inner way* to God, those deep things of life which have always been the final goal of all mysticism. Both these Luther saw revealed in Christ: He is the image of the Father, and He is the way. And therewith he set aside mysticism, for God is a Personality, and the way to Him is by a Person. Beyond this we know nothing of God, and by no other way can we go to Him.

With this, mysticism has found its accomplishment, for it has attained what it sought: an expression for the essence of God coinciding with divine life and the exclusive object of all life. And so there is no further need for mysticism, for the definition of God's being, and the union between God and man for which mysticism laboured, and for which it longed with all the passion and pain of human intelligence, has been accomplished in the *direct confidence* in which man now may approach the Author and Finisher of his faith. This is the only *unio mystica*, which we can know and live. In its original, *i.e.* in its pagan form, mystical union is a process of dissolution in which finally the work of God and of man is swallowed up, as may be abundantly proved from the history of heathen mystics. Christian mysticism has not led to this dissolution, because it had undertaken the great and arduous task of converting the heathen inheritance into personal property. In this none have succeeded so well as Luther. He practically



settled the momentous question, and in his maturer days he studied the mystics, not because their writings breathed the traditional mysticism, but because they contained the germ which was to cause it to explode.

# XI. QUIETISTIC MYSTICISM

THUS in one corner of the world at any rate people's minds were at rest, and their thoughts, no longer strained to the farthest possible stretch of human capability, could now with the greater confidence and cheerfulness turn themselves to the more natural duties of everyday life. The calm after the storm had a beneficial effect on Lutheranism, but its evil results were there also. In their satisfaction that the great question of salvation was now finally settled, people took their ease and became deaf and practically dead to those higher impulses which originally had set the problem in motion. The psychical fermentation, the mental strain, the fervour, characteristics of mystically tuned natures, were in Lutheranism supplanted by sound, practical, common-sense doctrines, so that even the intensity and poetic tendencies of Luther's early effusions—mementoes of his own mental struggle—became rare and unusual guests in his Church. And where they did perchance appear they never throve.

The dreamer and poet, John Scheffler, once a





noted Imperial Court physician, but better known under his assumed name of *Angelus Silesius*, had to experience how little room there was for a mystic in the Lutheranism of the seventeenth century. He broke with the Lutherans and was easily recaptured by the Catholics. They showed much tolerance for a son who in striking epigrams could express pregnant truths, like the following :—

"I know that without me God could not be,
Were I extinct, He would be non-existing also."

and again :—

"I am as great as God, He is as small as I am,
He is not above me, nor I below Him.
God's son am I, I sit at His right hand,
His spirit, His flesh, His blood I partake of."

Such experimental effusions Catholicism, when in a kindly mood, could allow to pass as the innocent pastime of a Court physician, but not so Protestantism. For in the Protestant religion such sentiments would have to be made into a dogma, and as such they would be a direct contradiction of the Creed.

For the same reason they could not leave in peace that good cobbler who indulged in visions, and who, bending over his task, meditated upon the origin of God and upon the condition of man before the Fall. Fortunately for himself this dreamer, Master *Jacob Boehme*, was able to prove to the satisfaction of the clerical gentlemen at Dresden

that his doctrines were not contrary to orthodox religion. In fact, he rather surpassed the Church in abstruse combinations, and fenced with Trinity and Incarnation as skilfully as any speculative theologian. He wanted to give his ideas a realistic character, and resorted to natural pantheism, which became both his strength and his weakness, and has always remained a peculiar feature of his teachings.

It seems strange that there should be resuscitated in the brain of this simple shoemaker a way of thinking which had been dead for a thousand years; a way of thinking which had flourished in the days of the Gnostics and the Neo-Platonic School; the idea that nature is contained in God, and consequently that human nature is filled with God. In this kind of speculative argumentation Master Jacob was quite as much at home as any Dionysius, and he inspired the philosophers and theologians of Romanticism again with it. They found in him the pantheism and the poetry which they required: "As a man's spirit rules his body and all its motions, in fact fills the whole man, so the Holy Ghost fills all nature, He is the heart of nature, and governs the good qualities in all things." "Man is made out of nature, out of the stars and the elements; but God the Creator is in them all, as the sap is in the tree." There is a thoroughly pagan sound in all this, and even when



Boehme speaks of the Father as the fountain-spring of all force, and of all forces fitting into one another and being as one force, it remains doubtful whether these sentiments can pass for sound Christianity. Boehme's mysticism was an unmistakable falling back into natural mysticism, even where he speaks from personal experience: "How near to us is God in nature!" and when he gives up his will to God, he does it that God may illumine him even as the sun illumines the world.

This plantlike receptiveness is the characteristic feature of Boehme's piety. When he describes the intercourse of the children of God with one another, his definition does not rise above that of the life of flowers. "Like as the various flowers stand in the ground and grow side by side, not upbraiding one another about colour, scent, or taste, but letting earth and sun, rain and wind, heat and cold, do what they like with them, all simply growing, each according to his own disposition—so it is also with the children of God."

In mystical effusions of this kind it is difficult to tell whether it is the Chinese Laotse, the Persian Saadi, or Hafiz, or a Christian who speaks, nor can we trace in it any development of Luther's views on the subject of natural mysticism. What would have been Luther's opinion of Boehme's *Aurora*, one wonders? Probably he would have said that this time "Die Frau Hulda"—as he often

calls Naturalism—had put on the cloak of Christianity to delude a simple cobbler into seeking God where only nature is to be found.

In the Catholic Church mysticism met with a better fate. Never had Christian mysticism entered more deeply into the human soul, never had its hold upon the people been so strong, never had its impression upon culture been deeper than in the mysticism of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it soon found its way back again into Protestantism also. It spread with infectious rapidity, overstepped the boundaries, found an entrance into the Reformed party, and finally penetrated the stronghold of Lutheranism. The religion of the seventeenth century, expressing itself in external rule and internal enthusiasm, is permeated with mysticism, and the innovations introduced in the Eastern and Western Churches are all tainted with it. Therefore not only the internal histories of Spain, Italy, and France, but also the histories of the Protestant movements, Pietists, Moravian Brethren, and Quakers, form a link in the history of mysticism.

The mysticism of those days does not yield much fruit for the philosophic mind. It does not inquire into the nature of God or of the Word, but is rather a practical form of piety, putting new life into the Catholic faith, and strengthening it



for the impending battle with Protestantism. What gave colouring to that period were the political experiences which mysticism passed through during the time of the anti-Reform movement. Yet it bore fruit of a quieter nature also, for at that time was born that peculiar kind of psychical apprehension, which was the outcome of deep self-examination.

And this quiet, introspective form of piety might well bear abundant fruit, for it was hatched in the hothouse of the convent. "*Go into thy closet, and close the door*," this was and became more and more the Catholic way of approaching God, and it also produced a hitherto unknown depth of soul. For the life lived behind the convent walls was so intense and so intimate that all the church offered to the outside world was either ignored or lightly esteemed by the initiated. The pity was that no one conceived the idea of posting up outside the door of the church what thoughts were maturing within the convent walls. No one ventured to propose the abolishment of certain dogmas and ceremonials, although all knew that the external apparatus could quite well be dispensed with. But the revolutionary powers, silently fostered by mysticism, never became really strong enough to explode into a reformation. They were held close in the grip of the church, just as in the human body disease

is kept under control until it revolts and kills the body.

Agitation was not the object in view, it was rest that was wanted before all things. "*And thou shalt find rest for thy soul*" was the second maxim in the evangel of mysticism. Therefore it was known as *Quietistic*. For this reason also it appealed to the individual, but had nothing to offer to assemblies. Its solace and its wisdom was communicated from soul to soul, but it did not teach men how to be useful to their fellow-men. Selfishness runs to seed in the garden of contemplation, and because mysticism is naturally egotistical, always fixing the attention on self even where it seeks self-effacement, it can never lead to any lasting good.

And yet—who would accuse of egotism that splendid, self-sacrificing, lovable woman to whose life and meditations the mystic productions of two centuries may be traced back? *Santa Teresa de Jesu* is not only the greatest saint of Spain, but the greatest saint of mysticism in general. Katharine of Siena, with whom she vies for the pre-eminence among the female coryphées of the Catholic church, possibly surpasses Teresa in strength of character and in charity, as also in historical importance for the ecclesiastical life of her generation. On the whole, she ought perhaps to be regarded as the greater of the two,



but in profundity of soul she cannot be compared with Teresa. In the latter, mysticism was not only motive power, but personal intuition. In her power of perception lies Teresa's superiority. She is not satisfied, like the German nuns, to interpret in emotion what the men of their time created in thought. No, the thoughts thought by men obtain perspective and vitality by passing through this woman's brain. She speaks much about the watering of the garden; she herself abundantly watered the garden of mysticism. All that was dry and wooden in the systems of men becomes fresh and verdant under her influence. One of the books from which she drew her knowledge bore the significant title of *Abcdarium tertium* (Francis of Osuna was the writer). What Teresa wrote, however, was not an A B C, but one of the maturest and richest works of the time. She set at liberty the thoughts wrapped up in scholastic coverings and fettered by Latin phraseology. She spoke the language of individuality in good Spanish; she wrote the best prose of the day, and her Spanish is still looked upon as classical.

St. Teresa is often depicted as a hectic enthusiast in supersensuous-sensuous ecstasy. Her historical portrait, however, which is in the possession of the Carmelite nuns at Valladolid, shows her as an energetic woman. The full, quiet, large-featured face, enframed in the nun's hood, reveals

noble descent and beauty. The weary eyelids and somewhat flabby cheeks speak of the glowing ashes of the convent life. The mouth, however, is still fresh and firm, expressive of great power of will and warm feeling.

She was of noble Old-Castilian birth, accustomed from her infancy to be honoured and obeyed. She divided her enthusiastic devotion between the Virgin and the romances of chivalry. The knights of romance took form in the person of her cousin, but her father interfered, and she was sent to a convent. It was much later, after her recovery from a serious illness, that she resolved to take the veil, and, in opposition to her father's will, she carried out her resolution. Her confessor, Vicentius Varenius, a Dominican mystic, led her step by step into the mysteries of mysticism, by giving her to read such books as Osuna's *Abcdarium*, and a "Tract on Prayer and Meditation" by the excellent Spanish mystic writer, *Peter of Alcantara*. She studied these until her soul was ablaze with holy fire, and in a vision she saw herself as the betrothed of Christ. Shortly after this experience she became personally acquainted with Alcantara, and made him her father-confessor.

At this time she was also fighting for stricter conventual discipline among the nuns. Her desire was to establish a more austere Order, which she eventually accomplished, and with her bare-



footed companions she shamed the noble daintily-shoed, luxurious Carmelite ladies, who, however, had their revenge.

She was expelled and persecuted, until finally Philip II.—in his relation to her a tolerant and beneficent man—came to her assistance, and obtained for her the papal sanction for the re-organisation of her Order as a distinct association.

From her convent cell, where she enjoyed rest and peace of mind and gave herself up more and more to ascetic exercises, she watched with keen interest the events of the outer world. Her lot was cast in the palmy days of Spain. In thought she followed her brothers on their perilous expeditions to the New World, and in their campaigns against the enemies of Spain. Her letters abound in intelligent remarks and sound advice. She is a practical administrator, and she admonishes her younger relatives, not only to lead honourable lives, but also to take a practical hold of life, and to invest their money wisely. Teresa was influenced by the indomitable will-power which at that time prevailed in Spain. Everywhere, in state and army, in civil and ecclesiastical life, an energy and purpose of will were seen, very similar to what we now see in Prussia. Ignatius de Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, built his institution on this will-power; Teresa, his junior by twenty years (she lived from 1515-82), made it into a

philosophy which, like Loyola's system, has preserved its power till now, or, perhaps more correctly, she founded her mysticism on a psychology which had the will for its centre.

There is among the fortifications of this world an "inner castle" (*el castillo interior*), the human soul, a stronghold of purest crystal. This stronghold has seven chambers, and the first we come to is the chamber of apprehension ; this is the outer court of the soul. Behind it is the chamber of the passions, and this is full of turmoil and strife. The third is the chamber of the fear of God ; here the passions are overcome. After that comes the chamber of rest, then that of union, and finally the closet of rapture. The innermost room in the very centre of the stronghold of the soul is the secret chamber where the mystical espousals with the Triune God take place.

Of all the gardens of the earth there is one which man has to tend and water constantly : this is the garden of the soul. At first one must draw the water with one's own hands from the fountain of spiritual life : this is done by the *prayer of observation*. Looking into self we behold our sinfulness ; looking outside of self we behold Christ's sufferings. But he who would improve his garden cannot rest satisfied with drawing the water from the main spring with his own hands. He makes channels to convey it, so that it may



freely flow over and overflow the beds and borders of the soul's pleasure-ground. This is represented by the *prayer of collected thought* or *quietness* (*oracion de quietud*). The mind is no longer preoccupied, for the human will is completely merged into the divine will, has become one with it. The external powers of the soul, however, are still active : reason and imagination are still exposed to the influence of the outer world, but the internal peace of mind continues, even when outwardly our thoughts are engaged in intellectual work (prayers, literary occupations, and such like). When the soul has been raised to join in the *prayer of union*, then we leave all human toil and labour behind. Then God Himself waters the garden of our hearts ; then the water rises and flows through innumerable channels, and not a spot remains dry. Thus not only the will but the intellect also is made one with God, and only memory and imagination are still free. The higher functions of the soul are gently slumbering on the bosom of Divine love, and only in a certain kind of mental activity, in wandering thoughts and devotional exercises, man's individuality asserts itself.

But this last function stops also in the *prayer of ecstasy* (*oracion del arrobamiento*), for therein *all* the powers of the soul are enchained ; the soul is altogether passive, paralysed in ecstatic delight. Now the garden of the soul is not merely watered,

but suddenly drenched by showers of Divine Grace, and the soul thus strengthened in its innermost parts reaches its highest possible flight. The body also is uplifted for a few short moments of superlative bliss, for no longer than half an hour this rapturous condition can last. Bathed in tears one wakes up from this trance. A gentle languor continues for some time, the kind of languor which we notice on Teresa's face in her picture.

The recognition of the inner life of the soul, as described here, is a forerunner of modern psychology. Teresa has a masterly way of keeping separate the various actions of the soul, and of observing their effects in the various orisons. This same self-examination underlies the *Confessions* of Augustine, but Teresa carries and develops it further. Teresa's autobiography is one of the chief authorities upon which religious sentiment is based, and her self-analysis is well on the way to becoming actual psychology. The fact that all the other functions of the soul are subservient to the will is not her own discovery, for this kind of contemplative religion was founded by Duns Scotus (see p. 164). But the becoming one with God through the will, which for him was still scholastic school-wisdom, is for Teresa the one all-absorbing ideal. She interprets love by will, "An arrow shot by the will." To become one with God in love means to her to be one with



God in will, that is, to let God's will implicitly govern the human will. And with this theory mysticism has become eminently practical; the old method of apprehending God is thrown overboard; Teresa will have none of the learned theology of Scholasticism. In her womanly wisdom she opposes this enemy as resolutely as does Luther in his manly intelligence.

This psychological investigation leads to yet further results. The constant dissecting and scrutinising of the impulses of the heart, the looking beyond and the discarding of the visible functions of the soul, not only made theological knowledge superfluous, but practically did away with the necessity for any visible expression of piety and religious observances. All this is very necessary for children, and perhaps for the laity in general, but they who are truly initiated know that there is only one way in which we can enter into profitable relationship with God, and that is by *prayer*. Not the prayer with rosary and formulas, and set, audible words, but the prayer that is prayed in silence; the prayer of contemplation, of concentration, of union, of ecstatic rapture as set forth in the ascending scale. It is the sublimest form of prayer, for it is not supplication or entreaty for any worldly goods, scarcely a prayer for internal joy and happiness, which used to be the object of prayer. It is a spiritual

condition in which one would abide, a state of contemplation, a hovering in spirit over the deep things of the soul, and a beholding and recognising of the image of God which is hidden in these innermost recesses. The beat of the wings which carry the soul to this highest flight of contemplative ecstasy, and the soul's labour which prepares the way for this contemplation, is called *meditation*. "Meditation labours and sows; contemplation reaps and rests." For more than a hundred years this scrutinising of one's own soul was the highest ambition of pious folk; they sacrificed all else to it, and doubtless much strength of soul was thus gained. First of all, it made them deserving in their own eyes, and by and by also in other people's eyes, until this sort of piety became the fashion, and ended in hypocrisy and dissimulation.

And that was a pity, for the original idea was good. Teresa's thoughts, in the simple form given to them by her friend, *Juan de la Cruz*, are almost Protestant; it is as if all the pagan elements had been eliminated, and nothing but pure Christianity was left. Union with God did not mean union in a pantheistic sense, but rather a transformation of the soul through love, leading up to a condition of perfect acquiescence to the will of God. The preparation for this union lies not in understanding, testing, proving or speculating on the essence of God's being, but in purity of mind and in love.



Asceticism is only practised in a spiritual sense, in suppressing the natural gift of inquiry, and admitting into the soul nothing but unquestioning faith. The mind is exclusively engaged in contemplating the life, the passion and the death of Jesus. All else is as non-existing. By this complete surrender of the will and of all moral and spiritual joys and aspirations, the soul receives salvation; nothing—not even the most special gift of grace—is counted of any value. And the person whose soul has thus been liberated is also exempt from all religious practices, from image-worship and pilgrimages and churchgoing—all which apparatus is only intended for beginners. Even the worship of saints shrivels into nothing.

The *thoughts* of these mystics, considered merely as theories, are right, and expressive of progress and reformatory energy, but when we look at their *lives* the picture presents an altogether different aspect. The aim of mysticism—and before which everything has to give way—is and always has been quiescence and emptiness of soul, darkened consciousness, and the suspension of natural understanding. All this eventually ends in conventual practices and the technics of the confessional, which two things are supposed to bring peace. Even where faith is defined as will, although superior as a theory, it only sinks the soul all the more easily into a state of quies-

cence, because the will is not exerted. Therefore Duns Scotus, the originator of the doctrine of the will, is also practically the founder of Quietism; the man who scientifically investigated the Augustinian doctrine for the repose of the soul—*donec requiescat in te.*

And this indiscriminate repose of the soul was greatly encouraged by the ruling forces of the age, namely, Absolutism and Jesuitism, of which Quietism is the religious counterpart. The evangel of passivity, the doctrine of perfect indifference, fitted admirably into the scheme of the authorities. But the power thus evoked concealed more than its promotors suspected. During one historical moment the existence of the Catholic Church, as it then was, hung in the balance, and if the threatened catastrophe had taken place, the Church would probably never have attained its present form; but Jesuitism was on the watch, and, making use of the bigotry of an all-powerful court, warded off the fatal step.

We refer to the drama enacted in Italy during the reign of Louis XIV. of France, and in which the Spaniard *Michael de Molinos* was the chief actor. He visited Rome in 1670. A young doctor of divinity of noble birth, rich and independent, shrewd and clever, of pleasing manners and appearance, he soon gained access into the best circles of the papal city. Even the heads of the



Jesuit party and the highest dignitaries of the Church honoured him with their confidence and accepted his spiritual advice. Molinos' *Guida spirituale* (1673), a little book of some two hundred pages, gives us a very fair idea of the kind of piety he introduced in Rome; it was downright Spanish mysticism, arguments taken from St. Teresa and Juan de la Cruz, cooked up by a brilliantly talented man at a propitious moment, and offered in delectable form; fascinating sometimes by its lucidity, sometimes by its witty paradoxes. His delicately traced psychological theories were formulated by the spiritual heads of the Church into a new method of confession which gave an entirely new character to the cure of souls and the way of salvation. "Wouldst thou that the omnipotent King should enter into thy soul, thou must see to it that thy heart be pure, innocent, quiet and free, unoccupied and empty, silent and meek; innocent of sins and shortcomings, free from fear, emptied of all thought, silent and meek under trials and temptations." "In this condition, in which the soul is concentrated upon self and in its deepest sanctuary hides the image of God; in this loving surrender of self, in which the soul esteems as naught all that is outside of God's will, we hear the voice of God, and converse with Him as if nothing else existed in all the world." The intelligent world

of Italy, which just then was getting heartily tired of "good works" and of "saints," as was the case in Germany at the time of the Reformation, gladly and eagerly took to this direct method of approaching God, and the lower classes hailed it as a means of escape from purgatory.

What could even a Sergeri avail against the heresy of Molinos? Sergeri, the famous Jesuit preacher, who even in his lifetime was venerated as a saint throughout Italy? The church bells might ring in towns and villages at Sergeri's approach, but Molinos was beyond his reach, for, as yet, the Jesuits of Rome had found nothing irregular in him. Of little use it was that the Neapolitan cardinal, Carracioli, laid before the Holy Office an elaborate treatise against the heresy of "passive prayer," which was now making thousands of converts in South Italy also. Molinos still enjoyed the popular favour, and he had a staunch friend in Pope Innocent XI., who, as Cardinal Benedict Odescalchi, had already been favourably disposed towards Spanish mysticism. In the first year after the accession of this Pope, the fame of Molinos became world-renowned. He was then an inmate of the Vatican, and soon regular pilgrimages were organised by priests and prelates from all Catholic lands, to receive his personal instruction on the doctrine of "the pure faith," and the psychology of the confessional. There can be little doubt about it that Innocent—who openly favoured Protestant notions, who in the contest between the Jesuits and the semi-reformed Jansenists sided with the latter, and also in his dispute with Louis XIV. was supported by that party—saw in the doctrines of Molinos a chance of ridding himself from the yoke, or at any rate of easing the burden, which the Jesuits laid upon the Pope by their unrelenting watch and guardianship of the papal office. The very marked favour in which Molinos was held at the court of Pope Innocent XI. can hardly be explained in any other manner, than by assuming that the Pope wanted to use this new kind of piety to give Catholicism a form which eventually would have made Jesuitism a superfluous factor, and would have done away with many meaningless and wearisome formalities in the ritual of the church. This desirable reform could easily have been accomplished in the seventeenth century, especially at the time of the friendly encounter of a highly gifted director of souls, and a rational Pope. But the propitious moment was allowed to slip by, and is only remembered as a historical event in which the Jesuits gained a signal victory.



The court of Louis XIV. was at that time the very heart of the life of France and of the world at large, watched over by the Jesuits as

assiduously as they once guarded the papal court, and therefore the centre from whence all the intrigues proceeded. The king's personal dislike of the Pope, with whom he had quarrelled over the revenues of vacant bishoprics, and who moreover was on friendly terms with the heretical Jansenists, was turned to good account by his confessor, Père la Chaise, and the clever manœuvring of other Jesuits at the court, in counteracting the prevailing liberal tendencies which threatened the life of the Society of Jesus.

The king, physically weak, tortured by fear of death and qualms of conscience, became an easy tool in the hands of the clergy ; he listened to their counsel, and firmly believed that by giving the death-stroke to papal liberalism he would serve his own interests and gain God's pleasure, just as he previously thought of pleasing God by the severe measures he adopted against the Huguenots and Jansenists. And the blow fell on Molinos, who now had to learn how short was the distance between the Capitol and the Tarpeian rock. The Pope was not powerful enough to resist the demands of the French ambassador for the institution of a strict examination of Molinos. The demand was naturally strongly seconded by the Jesuits, and the result was that Molinos, deserted by all who but a short time ago had loved and honoured him, was required publicly



to abjure his doctrines. The French ambassador himself had once been one of his intimate friends.

This abjuration took place with great pomp and ceremony on the 3rd September 1687, in the Church of St. Peter at Rome. The people who formerly crowded round to hear him, and strewed his path with palm branches, now cried for him to be crucified, and would have dragged him straightway to his death, if the papal guard had not stood round to defend him. Molinos was condemned to close imprisonment, taken to the Dominican monastery of San Pedro Montorio, and left to a fate over which a thick veil has been drawn. In 1697 it was announced that he had died, probably poisoned, conveniently cleared out of the way at a moment when his release was thought by the French ecclesiastics to be a dangerous possibility. And so the threatening thunder-cloud passed by—and nothing came of a reform through the instrumentality of mysticism.

The second drama of mysticism in which Louis XIV. and his court took part, and which was put upon the scenes by the unfortunate *Madame Guyon* (1648–1717), also ended in a mere emotional experience. Ill-health, conventual discipline, hatred of her relations, a forced marriage, and priest-ridden slander, had led her to the adoption of religious views which had originated in Switzerland, and in which she found strength and comfort

in all the trials and vicissitudes of her eventful life. Switzerland boasted at that time much spiritual life. A young and noble lady, *Madame de Chantal*, assisted by her confessor, *Francis de Sales*, had there instituted in 1610 a cloisteral rule, which in theory seemed a continuation of St. Teresa's mysticism, but in practice was a hysterical blunder which the Spanish nun would never have countenanced. One hardly knows which is the more despicable of the two; the woman, a widow twenty-six years old, who disfigures herself to avoid being forced into a second marriage, and, forgetting her motherhood, tramples on her son, who in a desperate effort to prevent her from entering the cloister throws himself in front of his mother before the convent door;—or the priest who persuades her that the remorse and doubt to which she presently becomes a prey are but the natural consequences she has to pay, the birth-pangs of Mary which she must bear in order that her Redeemer may be brought forth.

By such crafty reasonings Francis de Sales succeeds in distorting the mind of this richly endowed woman, and the fermentation of her soul, which without his interference would probably have led Madame de Chantal away from the sanctimoniousness of good works, and back to her children and her home, became clarified into an elixir, henceforth used by the Catholic Church as



a potent narcotic administered for the pacification of the troubled conscience. This narcotic is known as *l'amour désintéressé*. Doubtless there is a noble motive underlying this "disinterested love," for its object is the conquest of self, but it is easy to recognise the dangers which lurk behind such self-effacing devotion, the danger of egoism and the danger of the erotic. Whether in this condition of absolute surrender of soul one enjoys one's own or God's presence, certain it is that the path is not a straight one, and inevitably leads to sensuality, the very thing one has been trying to overcome. The pious souls, thus confused, could not find the natural way out of the difficulty, the way which Protestantism took; the way in which God appears as Father, and all mankind as brethren; the way in which love becomes the pure affection of children for their Father, and of brothers and sisters mutually; the love which frees the conscience because it bids it to follow the dictates of its inner consciousness; the love which overcomes self because it inspires other thoughts than those connected with one's own personality. Because this way could not be found, an artificial byway had to be invented, and a disinterested affection was manufactured which consisted in taking no interest in anything. The Quietism of Madame de Chantal ended in the indiscriminate ignoring of human nature, still surviving in the doctrines of

the Jesuits. In sad contrast to the Greek sculptor who prayed that his statue might become alive, she prays—and, curiously, both make use of the same imagery—that man might be as a statue, as cold, immovable, devoid of feeling, will, and thought as a statue in its niche.

" If the statue in its recess could speak, and we were to ask it : Why standest thou there ? it would answer : My lord and master has put me here. Why dost thou not move ? Because it is my lord and master's will that I should be immovable. Of what use art thou here ? Of what profit is it to thee to stand like this ? I do not exist for any profit I may derive from it, but merely that I may serve the master's purpose and obey his will. But thou canst not see him ! No, it would answer, but he sees me, and it is his pleasure to know that I stand in the place where he has put me. But wouldst thou not like to possess the power of moving, and to be able to draw nearer to him ? No, not without he wished it. Hast thou then no desires ? No, for I stand where my lord and master has placed me ; his pleasure in me is the only thing that satisfies my soul."

This view of life—if it may be called by so exalted a name—was the one adopted by *Madame de la Mothe-Guyon*. Hers was a nature which rejoiced in affliction and gloried in physical pain, otherwise one would think that she might have



been satisfied with her share of sorrow, in having a wicked mother-in-law, a disagreeable husband, and a Jesuitical brother, without adding to it the " refreshment " of having periodically a sound tooth extracted, leaving the decayed ones untouched ; also enjoying the pleasure, every time she sealed a letter, of letting the hot wax drop on to her fingers, and when nursing the sick being guilty of the abominable perversity of eating of their vomit. She boldly declared that for the ove of Christ she was consumed with longing for suffering. Suddenly she was seized with a dislike for all creatures, all that was outside her love of Christ became repulsive to her. The cross which hitherto she had borne with resignation now was her joy and her delight. So greatly had this poor soul been tortured with grief, that she made her grief into a joy. Yet there is none of that repulsive coldness in her which characterised Madame de Chantal. It does not enter into her mind to desert her children, in fact it was her one consolation to take refuge with them when the world rejected her. With gentle patience she bore the subtle tortures and the malicious aspersions inflicted upon her by the priests when in her widowhood she devoted herself to a religious life, and when, before retiring from the world, she had given away all her property in charities. Then with her own hands she nursed the sick,

and bound up their wounds; even the day came when she, who had once commanded one of the largest fortunes in France, had to beg Madame de la Chetardier for some articles of underclothing as she was quite destitute. And another day came when she—who had been the confidante of Madame de Maintenon, and who had set the fashion in Paris of a certain kind of piety—was lying sick and lonely in her cell, a prey to the persecutions and torments of the relentless Bishop Bossuet, who brutally attempted to draw confessions from her in her weak state. All this she meekly bore.

And because she possessed this Christian strength, there is in the mysticism of Madame Guyon a delicacy of feeling which neither Madame de Chantal nor Francis de Sales attained to, although their ideas were practically the same. As a matter of fact, Madame Guyon mistrusts all visionary and ecstatic conditions. In a vision, she says, one sees neither God nor Christ, but only an angel of light, a reflection of Christ, as the rainbow reflects the sun. Ecstasy she explains as spiritual sensuality, in which the devil by sweet experiences seeks to mislead the soul and draw it away from Christ. Even holy enthusiasm, which is a force of attraction from God Himself, is for her a condition of incompleteness, because the soul remains chained to self; that is, it is occupied with itself, although all the time trying to escape from self. However



much people may admire this sublime condition, it is imperfect, and shows that there is something lacking in human nature.

Therefore—and now one would expect something sensible, for all this rightly interpreted totally upsets the programme of mysticism, but alas! the conclusion is Quietism—therefore: self must be given up entirely. True enthusiasm and perfect ecstasy are consummated in total negation; the soul, empied of all its attributes, and having no will and no desire apart from God, glides into the Godhead, the only place where it is at home.

In this manner Madame de Guyon also reaches the point of annihilation. Yet—like St. Teresa—she imparts a kind of beauty and poetry to this sad, retrogressive journey of the soul. In her first, admirable book, *Les torrents*, she describes how God, her spiritual guide, like a trusted steersman, pilots her safely through the floods and torrents of life and the many currents to which the soul is exposed, until she reaches the sea; and the sea is God. A far wider circulation, however, had her "Short Guide to Prayer," published in 1688 under the title of *Moyen court et très facile de faire oraison*. This book made her fortune, for like wildfire it spread through the whole of France, and instructed pious folk in a few simple words about the new road to salvation; a *Guida spirituale*, which soon became the catechism of the mundane

world. But this book was also her misfortune, for therein her heresies were printed black on white. In 1688, after suffering much from calumny and priestcraft, she was suddenly set free at the instance of Madame de Maintenon, and soon after gained this lady over to her views. The royal mistress was by no means a person without heart or intellect. With interest she followed the religious currents of the day, and she spent her last days in the Convent of St. Cyr, where she founded a celebrated infant asylum. Her cell became the audience chamber for clerics of all denominations, with whom she sometimes conversed for hours at a time.

Madame Guyon became her favourite, and the *Moyen court* had the honour of finding a place in Madame de Maintenon's pocket. The authoress was admitted at court; she gave lectures in Madame's cabinet, and she propagated her doctrines in the Convent of St. Cyr by holding conferences and instituting highly spiritual exercises. Thus she spent four happy years, and seemed to have found her right place, appreciated by the women where the men had betrayed and misjudged her. She had found her vocation as woman, and her many trials and troubles stood her in good stead.

Once again she fell under the suspicion of the clergy. The mighty Bishop of Meaux, the prelate



Bossuet, much elated by the recent victory of the French Church in Rome at Molinos' trial and conviction, suddenly became alarmed at the popularity of Madame de Maintenon's protégée. The dispute, however, which started with the discussion of Madame Guyon's principles, embraced considerably more than the writings of this unfortunate lady, who, after recalling many of her theories and being acquitted of heresy, was accused of immorality, caused much scandal, fell into disfavour at court, was twice imprisoned in the Bastille, and ended her days at her son's house in a small town near Blois. The controversies connected with her trial are of minor importance compared with the fierce dispute which ensued between the two chief dignitaries of the Church in France, the " Eagle of Meaux " and the " Swan of Cambray," Bossuet and Fénelon.

Both had been called upon to give their verdict in the case of Madame Guyon. The two prelates could easily have agreed in condemning certain of her theories (which she eventually recalled), but upon the point of the mysticism underlying these it was not so easy for them to be of one mind. Fénelon, whose gentle, emotional soul and poetic refinement manifests itself in all his writings and is reflected in the literature influenced by him, had from an early period followed with keen interest the chances of the life of inner contempla-

tion, revived by Madame Guyon, and it was far from him to wish that this revival should be nipped in the bud. Bossuet, on the other hand, recognising mysticism only in its scholastic and ecclesiastical form, wrote a violent treatise against Madame Guyon, *Instruction sur les états de l'oraison*, 1707. Fénelon, who in the meantime had become Archbishop of Cambray, refused not only to put his "imprimatur" under this, but wrote a counter-article which added greatly to aggravate the hostile feelings between the two churchmen. In his article, *Explication des Maximes des Saints*, Fénelon speaks in a very conciliatory manner about French Quietism.

M. Matter, the historian of French mysticism, is to a certain extent right to be indignant that Madame Guyon should always be blamed and Fénelon admired, while all the time it was the ideas of Madame Guyon which the great author developed, and which had made him into a mystic. Yet there is a distinct difference in their views. The southern intensity and womanly impetuosity of Madame Guyon's views, partly the result of temperament and partly due to the influence of Spanish mysticism, was in Fénelon converted into a calm collectedness. He understood how to prepare French wine without any Spanish admixtures, and he saw the practical possibility of the principle. He realised that the *disinterested*



*love*, which in Quietism leads to barren waste, contains something which might be made profitable to Christian life, by giving a slightly different meaning to the word *amour* than the one attached to it by the nuns. The nuns founded their relationship to God on *erotic* love, the amorousness which they had struggled to conquer in their natural bodies. But Fénelon was not of an amorous nature; he was rather a highly moral and philosophical personality. Therefore the philosopher in him queries: Who is this God who should be loved in this manner? And the moralist in him answers: He is "goodness" (*l'idée du bien*). To love disinterestedly, then, is the same as to give oneself up to goodness (or good works), and consequently this affection may be defined as the highest *ethical* condition man can attain to. As we love God for His own sake, so we love goodness for goodness' sake; and therewith an ethical standpoint has been reached where one is not influenced either by hope of reward or fear of punishment, in other words, the standpoint at which personality comes to its due. And so, ever since the days of Fénelon, *disinterested charity* is preferably spoken of, implying that it is not so much a question of love in the general sense, but rather of *Christian* love expressing itself in works of charity. In this theory, at once philosophical and Christian, Fénelon gave to the pet ideas of the Quietists

an application which at once made them popular not only among the Catholics, to whom the same idea under the form given to it by the Quietist nuns had been repulsive, but also—and this is the more remarkable fact—in the philosophical world. No less a man than Leibniz, the great German philosopher and statesman, declared that *disinterested love* in the form given to it by Fénelon was incontestably the ideal of true humanity and true Christianity.

Leibniz, who as philosopher sought to strike a compact betwen the religious and the humane, and as statesman endeavoured to reconcile the various parties in the church, found in this suggestion of Fénelon's a form of piety in which all could be agreed. "I believe," he writes, "that it was the intention of Monseignor the Archbishop of Cambray to lift up the soul to the true love of God, and to bring it into that condition of repose which necessarily follows where this love is enjoyed, at the same time rejecting the illusions of false peace in God; and I think that nothing further need be preached but this true love towards God" (*Fragments*, pp. 174–175). "This divine love," he says (p. 173), "stands immeasurably high above all earthly affection. For all that is worthy of our love in creation is a part of our own joy and happiness, while our joy in God is not a *part* of our happiness but our *complete* happiness. It is the



source of all happiness, the only joy which is not harmful in its consequences, the only joy which is truly and absolutely good, and which can cause neither remorse nor doubt." This disinterested love implies for Leibniz also the correct relationship towards God and the correct relationship towards man; it is true piety and true morality, for only where egoism has been effectually conquered can there be question of true morality. And so love becomes the basis of society and the principle of the law. In this connection Leibniz defines the administration of justice as "Charity regulated by wisdom" (*la charité reglée suivant la sagesse*), as a social principle having the public welfare in view, which can only be carried out by keeping in mind the *general* interest and not the interest of the *individual*.

Thus the great thinker formulated the fundamental idea of the mysticism of the seventeenth century ,which had originated in the desperate struggle of individual souls to rise above self. Out of unprofitable self-effacement he formed a principle of profitable, energetic social intercourse, which became the pulsating power of the age of Rationalism.

## XII. OUTCROPS AND AFTER-EFFECTS

In conclusion, we would briefly pass in review the variegated crowd of mystical forms and thoughts which have stirred cultured Europe since the classical days of mysticism.

Roman Catholicism still bears practically the stamp which it received in the seventeenth century. Both the piety of the laity and the practices of the Jesuits are tainted with mysticism ; prayers and hymns, images and legends, carry the impress of it, that is, in so far as medieval notions can be kept alive in a civilisation which will no longer tolerate asceticism, absolutism of the Church, and theology as only scientific knowledge. These are things, says the Catholic, which demand an intimacy of life of which bare Protestantism has no conception. We cultivate in our cloister gardens a flower which cannot thrive with you ; we have dug up the treasure which the fool had left buried in the ground.

More prominent than with us is the dominion of mysticism in the east of Europe, where the glaring pictures in the churches, the visionary





monks, and the vast multitudes of patient, passive people all silently bear witness to the power exercised by a religion which controls the masses without words, without thoughts, without deeds, except those prescribed by the rites and discipline of the Church. And yet the power of mysticism is not greatest in the " Orthodox " churches.

It is in the Russian sects that mysticism is yet seen in its primitive force. The close church atmosphere fostered the hectic epidemic which broke out here as elsewhere. The names of these sects show their spirit : " Shakers," " The Silent Ones," " They who find rest in this life," " Not—ours " (for they are God's). The best known are the " Duchoborzer,"—" Spirit Fighters," —also children of the seventeenth century, a sect which gained entrance in Russia in the reign of Peter the Great. They have the " inner light " which teaches them all that is necessary for salvation ; teaches them also to dispense with church and mass, and to reject the sign of the cross and the sacraments ; to refuse military service and the taking of the oath—a truly dangerous element in the Church and the army of Russia. Therefore these sectarians were dispatched to the Crimea ; there, however, they were too comfortable, and nowadays they reside somewhere in Trans-Caucasia.

The " Stundists," evangelically minded pietists, called into existence not long ago by the peasant

Michael Ratrischnyj, will also shortly have to be banished. For they likewise abuse the sacraments, or call them mere symbols; but the worst feature in their belief is that they firmly hold that all men are equal, that all have equal rights, that there ought to be neither money nor commerce in the world. These folks are not wholly unfamiliar to us, although we may not know them by their sectarian name. We have all heard of the long-bearded farmer, a peasant with the title of count and bearing a poet's name, who endorses all these views, and has besides very peculiar ideas about marriage. One cannot really understand *Tolstoi* unless one knows something of the mysticism of the Russian people and their communistic ideals.

Looking westward, we discover the glow of mysticism even behind England's foggy horizon. The people there are not so sober-minded as Continentals are apt to think. Mingled with the prose of life, with its *matter-of-factness*, and its *business*, there is a ring of softer notes, and sometimes of stronger voices, which speak another language than that known in the Parliament or on the Exchange, another language even than is heard in the Sunday's sermon in the Cathedral.

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep!"



If the finest and healthiest of all poets could lay such words on the lips of Englishmen, what might not be expected of the blind Puritan singer whose *Paradise Lost* is more beautiful than his *Paradise Regained*, and whose most beautiful poem is about the night of blindness, his own experience, and the light that breaks through the darkness.

And what a world of darkness and of light there was in the mind of the tinker who, out of his own humble pilgrimage through life, created the book which after the Bible is the most read of all English books, the friend of all simple believers, and the admiration of critics and scholars. Do not Macaulay, the English academician, and Taine, the French scholar, vie with one another in singing the praises of *John's Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress,"* because it describes so clearly and vividly, so earnestly yet so pleasantly, the inner experiences of the soul as well as the outer conditions of life? Yet, after all, it was only intended for a book of devotion, written in mystic style, noting the various stages on the road of life, until the journey's end is reached and the days of sorrow are ended; until the weary wanderer, who has lived a life of faith, enters the Promised Land, which he has longed for with a greater longing than they who wait for the morning. With Bunyan all is personal, all is realistic, every

word-picture is clear and plain, every conception palpable. Yet in him stirred the old vague longing, and he had to go through all the phases of intuition and ecstasy, in fact through the whole process of spiritual darkness, before he learned to see the world in the light of actuality.

Then there is also the divinely inspired tanner, George Fox,—it would seem that spiritual mysteries have often been entrusted to simple craftsmen,—who one day made himself a suit of leather, in order that in this practical attire he might preach with the greater independence the holy mysteries which had been revealed to him. Carlyle fitly says that the making of this suit of leather was one of the most remarkable incidents in modern history. Truly the Quakers and their mysticism are a modern curiosity, although their small external peculiarities, their sombre garb and shovel hat, are gradually being discarded. The inner man gives them plenty to do; for in no sect the internal sensations are made so much of as among these peace-loving Anglo-Saxons, who in our days, as in the days of old, are the untiring advocates of honesty, piety, and charity; these first idealists of equality and human right, who address all people as "thou," and take off their hat to no one. These first promulgators of universal peace were never sought by any Indian's arrow, for they brought their red brethren goodwill and commercial benefits instead of discord; no modern projectiles ever struck them down, except when they exposed themselves to shot and shell in ministering to the needs of others suffering from the horrors of war. All this is good Christianity, and the kind of Christianity that is not fruitless. There was a time when American liberty was held to be the pattern of the rights of humanity, as they were proclaimed throughout France in the eighteenth century. There still exist a prison-administration and a prison-supervision, which owe their being to the Philadelphian Brotherhood and the saint of prison life, *Elizabeth Fry*.



The books of the Quakers reveal pure, clear mysticism: inner light and inner peace, God's voice in man and in all things with which men come in contact; no set teachers and no set doctrine, and Christ in the first place an inner experience. No external rites or prescribed prayers—only waiting in silent expectancy for the voice of the Holy Ghost to find utterance. Such is their worship. Then some one is suddenly moved to speak by the Holy Spirit; prophetic utterances, accompanied by violent shaking, follow, and from this latter sign they have derived their name. In some of the American branches this quaking has degenerated into ecstatic leaping and jumping. The "inner light" compels them

to read their Bible assiduously, and in silence they meditate upon what they have read. This is the reason that their religion, although in its mystical principles in no way distinguishable from any other (not even pagan) mysticism, has yet remained Christian. Possibly their rationalism, which kept them in touch with the inner side of Christianity and with the spirit of Christ, is the cause that their Christianity is so inward and intimate, and that they walk in the spirit of Christ to the shame of many other Christians. The smallness of their numbers, on the other hand, may prove that the basis on which they founded their Christendom is not rich enough to support a popular Christianity.

Since the age of Puritanism and Quakerism, mysticism has run like an undercurrent among the English populace, while the upper classes have bowed before the laws of reason and utilitarianism. But the old craving has never been entirely killed. With the entrance of Romanticism in England the springs of mysticism burst open afresh; it mildly flows through *Wordsworth's* poems, it rushes wildly through *Carlyle's* Puritanical and pantheistic idealism, and wakes a somewhat feebler echo in *Emerson* on the other side of the Atlantic. Even *Tennyson*, with all his clearness, is somewhat of an ecstatic when in genuine mystic fashion he challenges his poetic genius to reveal



itself. *Robert Browning* and *Charles Kingsley*, in short, most of the popular English authors, have drawn from the mystic well, or have it bubbling in themselves.

All these men, on the surface so different from one another, have this one thing in common, that they all desire to see the "infinite in things finite," and consecrate their life to the finding of it. For, as *Samuel Johnson*, the forerunner of idealism, said, in the materialistic age which preceded this period, "people have lost their soul out of their body, and now run hither and thither in search of it." Now these men saw—and especially the poets among them saw—the infinite reflected in nature, and man as the central figure in nature, the symbol of the meeting between nature and spirit.

> "The sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things."

This is not only Wordsworth's sentiment, but it expresses the feeling of a host of English poets, philosophers, and theologians, their minds bearing the impress of intuition, and having been fertilised by pantheism; from *William Law*, the Platonist of

the eighteenth century, down to such modern men as *Francis Newman*, with his *Phases of Faith*. In all we notice the same desire which we met with in Fénelon and Leibniz, the desire to make the divine fit in with the demands of reason and morality. The Quakers, in their rational explicit way, made out that the " inner light " is the same as reason and conscience. The Romantic School, however, explains these ideas psychologically, and amplifies them into a general theory. In *Julius Hare's* celebrated work, *The Victory of Faith* (1839), the English counterpart of Schleiermacher's *Reden*, a depth of soul is attributed to man, in which mind and heart and will in original unity are inseparably present. This primitive force is *faith*, the faith which raises heart and will and mind from the visible to the invisible ; the power in man by which the spiritual world can exercise its influence over man, and therefore the only faith by which man can live. This same idea Newman expresses in his *Phases of Faith*, and *Emerson* lingers lovingly on the contemplation of this inner nature, and finds in it not only the unity of man's being, but also man's unity with God. In the innermost depths of the human soul, he says, lies the soul of the universe, the wisdom of silence, the essence of beauty in which all worldly things are contained in their due proportions : " the Everlasting Existence." And



as he contemplates external nature he reads with keen, kindly perception the book of nature, written in the secret language of God, and finds God himself in all the beautiful things of nature. In the joy of this discovery he forgets to see what is ugly or to notice the evil. To him God indwelling nature means the prevalence of good in the world, and God taking up his abode in man means man doing what is good. This is an idyllic nature—mysticism in temperate sunshine, and a moral optimism which sounds like music without discords.

His friend *Carlyle* declares the unity of the world with the thunder of Sinai, and reveals the inner being of nature by volcanic eruptions. To him the firm earth on which we tread (and who trod it firmer than Carlyle !) and the stars we see and the worlds we imagine—the whole universe, in fact, is but a garment in which God clothes Himself ; God, who is invisible in Himself, but made visible in this vesture. Nevertheless, He is real in His invisibleness, so real that He is the only reality. Therefore the world is before all things spirit ; before all things infinity, before all things justice—completely controlled by these qualities, existing through them alone, without them mere show and shadow. The worth of all things is in the ideal ; all reality is in the ideal ; only through the ideal the visible assumes reality ; it would lose

all its value, would dissolve into nothing if the ideal were absent. And as this Divine Presence dwells in nature, so it also dwells in man. Is there any clearer manifestation of the Divinity to our eyes and to our heart than in our neighbour? "Bending before men is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh." We are the wonder above all wonders, the great, unfathomable mystery of God. We cannot understand it, nor can we argue about it, but we can, if we will, feel and experience that it is verily true.

All this we read in the "Philosophy of Clothes," in that marvellous book *Sartor Resartus* (1835), in which Spinoza's pantheism and German Romanticism, Puritan earnestness, and English matter-of-factness meet—mysticism in every word and behind every outbreak of eloquence. And yet the more Carlyle thinks about it, the more this transparent perception becomes a clear discernment of the *moral* reality of which this God-filled, God-inspired nature consists. The great spirit of the world is just, that was the message of the prophets, of Calvin and also of Fichte. All great men have said it, all noble men have experienced it; it is the voice of wisdom in the history of man; the voice of nature in man. He who defies this reality must run aground against it,—all have done so sooner or later,—for this law is immutable as the law of phyiscal nature itself.



. Therefore, obey the law of *reality*, for it is the law of God and the law of nature. Be true and just and natural; do thy work honestly and without presumption, do it with all thy might; be brave, be earnest, be just and merciful; think not of thyself, but think of others; give thyself to the society in which thou movest, and to the cause for which thou workest, and thou shalt bring forth out of this poor earth blessings abundantly, as many as can be attained here below. Such is "the gospel of labour" which Carlyle preached, and this exhortation to practical activity, justice, and self-sacrifice is the basis of the mysticism of the nineteenth century. Through Carlyle, with his materialistic demands, mysticism has taken root in English soil, and that in a century which, like Carlyle himself, began with the dreams of the Romantic School and ended in the Realism of labour and common interest.

But where in the Lutheran church is the heritage of mysticism to be found? *Pietism* and the German *Romantic School* are the heritage. For some time it seemed as if the Lutheran church had been disinherited and had retained no vestige of mysticism, although, through Luther, relationship could certainly be claimed. He himself, with advancing years, had broken off the connection, and he rejoiced in having done so when he saw

where mysticism had led the Anabaptists, the stepbrothers of the Reformation. The Baptists, and particularly the "prophets of Zwickau," who styled themselves the genuine and consistent Reformers, in spite of their radical notions still practised mysticism in the old Catholic fashion, with ecstasy and the prophetic "being possessed," with hatred against the Church and hostile feelings towards the State, with Socialism and Theocracy, and the strange coupling together of liberty in the Holy Ghost and slavery under sectarian views and duties, as it is found everywhere in mystic communities. The still more objectionable coupling of moral freedom with the slavery of sin, was not absent in this Baptist form of mysticism either, and there sin had its own reward, for the wages of sin is death. The Baptist movement never grew to be a historical power, but its after-effects are still perceptible now and again, not so much in the Lutheran but rather in the Reformed Church.

In the Reformed Church the Baptist spirit could more easily find shelter; for, in the Reformed party, there also lurked theocracy and the doctrine of penances and discipline, Old Testament inspirations and a Jewish scrupulousness in the fulfilment of the law. The harshness and dryness which prevailed among the followers of Calvin and Zwingli opened the door to mysticism.



The reaction of feeling set in sooner there, and the mistake of Calvinism was that it gave so little room to individual piety, that less even than in the Catholic church the inner, personal life was cared for. Moreover, it had no poetry to offer beyond what could be culled from the Old Testament writings. The Lutherans were dry enough, but they had at least their Luther and Paul Gerhardt.

To Ritschl belongs the credit of having shown Lutheran Pietism as a genuine offspring of the Reformed Church, where it fed on the mysticism which, with true Catholic and Anabaptistic birthmarks, went about among the Zwinglians and Calvinists, both in Germany and in the Netherlands. Holland was a fruitful soil for that kind of excitement. There monastic piety always went about clad in the old mystical traditions of the Middle Ages. There the memory still survived of the great Dutch mystic, *Jan van Ruisbroek* (*b.* 1294), whose speculative pantheism, as contained in his Dutch writings, was accessible to all, and whose contemplative piety survived in the "Brotherhood of Common Life." The old seed sprang up again with renewed vigour, and in *Theodor Brakel* the unveiled semi- or wholly Catholic tenor of the mysticism of the seventeenth century in Holland is very perceptible. He taught that true happiness consists in the union of the soul with God and Christ; that the only

really spiritual attitude of the soul is the being espoused to the perfect Spirit ; the soul thus being filled and satiated with God. His compatriot, *Herman Witsius*, suggested that the sanctuary of the " Celestial Academy " could not be entered by hearing, nor by the intellect, nor by faith, but only by seeing and tasting God. For therein lies God's great goodness, that He teaches His beloved by experience, by taking them apart into His secret place, His tabernacle. In this conviction people began to sing the old melody over again, the melody which resounds in the Song of Solomon and the Shulamite. The Pietists took up the strain, and sang it unceasingly to prove the Biblical right of their erotic love of God.

But they proved the mystical rather than the Biblical origin of their piety. In this one respect, in their erotic love of Jesus, Pietists and Moravian Brethren alike greedily absorb the mystic heritage. In other things the Pietists are not at all mystically disposed. Their conception of God is not pantheistic or speculative ; nor can their piety be called ecstatic, any more than their morality, in many respects puerile and superficial, bears an ascetic character. Pietism settled down comfortably both in Church and State, and never overstepped the boundaries of social life. On the contrary, none obeyed Luther's injunctions : " to live and to labour in that state of life to which



he had been called," more scrupulously than those industrious, kind-hearted people who served their God with plane and saw, rejoicing in the fact that Jesus himself had been a carpenter and Paul a tentmaker. Untiring philanthropists they were, who established schools, orphanages, and dispensaries with as much vigour as they printed Bibles and sent out missionaries. These pietistic ancestors laid the foundation of the ideal social virtues afterwards embodied in the Rationalists. The Humanists and pedagogues of the eighteenth century merely reasoned out what the Pietists had conceived by faith.

This pietistic faith, however, became fanatical as it came nearer to the point—so sadly neglected by Orthodoxy—namely, the point of perfect resignation and self-sacrifice. There was a hungering and thirsting which reason could not satisfy ; they therefore refreshed themselves at the living source of Lutheranism, even though they had to search it out from under the dry leaves. They went back to the old wells ; they read St. Bernard's exposition of the Song of Solomon and Suso's *Book of Wisdom*, and drew fresh water from the nearest spring, the New Catholic mysticism of Molinos and Francis de Sales. They did not go quite as far as the " disinterested love " theory of Madame Chantal and Madame Guyon ; they were too practical and energetic for that.

Yet, in their active workaday life and in their observance of holy days, there is an undercurrent of Quietism, which made their souls passively expectant.

The love which they learned from the mystics was not disinterested, like that of Madame Guyon and Fénelon. The struggle against the erotic and the egotistical in their resignation to God, introduced by Madame Guyon, and carried further by Fénelon, found no place in German Pietism. But there is over it all an atmosphere of trembling and languishing, of feeling and tasting, a wail of amorous affection and an unveiled longing, which was carried to perfection by the Moravian Brotherhood, who in their inner life and their social arrangements are more mystical than the Pietists. All this leaven of mysticism flows through Zinzendorf's sacred hymns.

But the purer form of Pietism also breathes the spirit of mysticism, and that this also is a product of the seventeenth century becomes evident when we analyse the devotional writings and hymns of the best Pietistic authors. Let us take the most beautiful of them all, the Dane *Brorson*, whose spiritual songs are the groundwork of all the Christian piety of the North, and are sung every Sunday in the churches of Schleswig, Denmark, and Norway, and we cannot fail to see the connection.



The characteristic feature of this poetry is its strong, subjective strain, the constant circling round the feelings of the soul. The movement is the same as in the days of St. Teresa, a gradual climbing up from the soul's complete emptiness of God to the perfect enjoyment of God's presence. However biblically Brorson discourses on sin and grace, in his comprehension of the poles of Christian life, there is something of these contrasts : emptiness and fulness, distance and nearness, which were the chief points in St. Augustine's mysticism. Thirst and dryness of soul, cold and darkness are the negative pole of his experience. This is the *siccitas* with which mysticism always works ; the " barrenness " of the soul until it is touched by God. This sterility expresses God's anger ; man feels himself lost in his sinfulness, rejected, abandoned. Longing and sighing, urging and weeping are the signs which mark this period. But comfort is near, for, by the persistent feeling of want and emptiness, the soul is being prepared for the fulness of grace. This grace, which in the first place is the forgiveness of sins, comes as a sudden revelation, as a breaking through the clouds, of warmth and light, as a refreshing stream, as a fertilising influence. Then the hour of gladness has come, then the victory is won, and suddenly the struggle is at an end. It comes of itself, for it is grace ; but it only comes where the emptiness is felt to its full

extent. It comes in the way of God's law of salvation, as the rose came forth and the seed bore fruit when the world was void and empty; but it also comes as a kind of psychological necessity. From emptiness springs fulness; when the heart is most troubled, the harp of joy is being tuned that it may have the truer sound.

This condition of expectancy, which is the point of gravitation in his psychology, Brorson has nowhere entered into more deeply than in his beautiful poem, "Wait, O wait, and keep silence, O my soul!" This poem, the first verse of which sounds like the refrain of all mysticism, is the northern and Protestant counterpart of St. Teresa's description of the watering of the soul's garden. Brorson's symbol of the soul forsaken of God is not Spanish barrenness and dryness of soil, but the gloomy northern winter. Not masoned waterworks and artificial makeshifts, but the gradually approaching northern springtime, represents to him the process the soul has to pass through before the blessing comes. *There*, the zeal of Catholic hands, watering the garden until the moisture comes of its own accord, ending in showers of heavenly blessing; *here*, in Brorson's poem, only silent expectation and passive receptiveness: "Only in waiting thy summer is sure."



Constant expectation, constant drawing nearer; always step by step, such is the desired attitude. All that happens to the soul has its prototype in nature; all is done *for* the soul, not *by* the soul. And when Brorson refers to the "anguish of dryness," he does not set to work with watering-cans and augers, he does not dig canals to convey the water of life, he only knows of one remedy, the remedy that comes without our aid, when the hour of grace has struck—

> "Come, heavenly shower, refresh the earth,
> And make it a valley where the lilies grow."

Therefore ultimately and intrinsically Brorson is Protestant; and whatever may be said against Pietism, that it is Catholic and mystical, Reformed or Anabaptistic, one thing is certain, namely, that it was a revival of Lutheran Christianity, that it saved the life of Lutheranism when it was ready to die, and vitalised its spiritual and social energies into being more what they were in Luther's days than in the days of even his immediate successors—although possibly the life thus revived was lived with paler cheeks and more sombre mien than Luther's life and early Lutherdom ever was.

Rationalism was not the death of mysticism, as many people imagine. The roots of Pietism

had struck too deeply, and mysticism is too closely interwoven with human inclinations to make it possible for it to disappear altogether from the ken of religion. Moreover, the enlightened, rationalistic views were, especially at first, confined to the upper classes and the scholars, and did not penetrate to the masses. When in simple folk the intellect was roused, they did very much the same as did the parents of *Jung Stilling*, they read the works of John Arndt and Thomas à Kempis, and even those of Jacob Boehme and Fénelon, and were edified by them. They drew from the wells of mysticism the inner light which the higher and enlightened circles drew from the intellect, and set up as new lamps.

Yet how easy and gentle could be the transition of mysticism into Rationalism, even within the sacred precincts of scientific culture, we have already had occasion to notice in the case of Leibniz and Fénelon, but a more violent and more direct breaking through of the mystic vein took place in the mind of a man who occupied a high position in the physical-mathematical world of his day, and whose moral strength and refinement placed him on a line with the noblest intellects of the period. We refer to the Swedish seer, *Emmanuel Swedenborg*. The "Träume eines Geistersehers" (Dreams of a Visionary), as Kant styled Swedenborg's ideas, are not merely a



product of northern phantasy, such as to this day leads excitable minds into all kind of mystical extravagances, nor was Swedenborg in the first instance a clairvoyant and spiritualist. His was rather an all-embracing mind, who set himself the enormous task of building up a system of nature which, after the manner of the Areopagite, was to encompass and bring into natural harmony the spiritual and the material scopes of the world. He did not set to work ignorantly and amateurishly, like a Boehme had done, but with all the means of science at his disposal he built up a ladder, with naturally graduating and mutually corresponding steps, landing one ultimately into the world of spirits with whom man can hold intercourse even in mortal life. This latter adjunct was the mysticism in Swedenborg. The boundaries of knowledge set by his contemporary Kant, he either did not know or ignored. The way to God also he made direct, plain to the Christian mind, because the invisible is incorporated in Christ, and, existing in Him alone, is accessible to the receptive mind as an historical fact.

The distinctive principle of Swedenborg's theology, however,—that the spiritual is only visible in the corporeal, the divine only comprehensible in the human,—is a foreboding of the Romantic School. Swedenborg is not a Romanticist, nor a Rationalist, properly speaking. Both these

schools looked upon him as eccentric, but his influence was not as great as that of that other eccentric, his contemporary, *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, who also stood midway between Romanticism and Rationalism; Rousseau brought the forces of Rationalism to bear upon Romanticism, and his ideas are therefore to this day of universal significance for the spiritual life of Europe. Swedenborg's influence was the influence of a sectarian —only sectarians have followed him.

With the *Romantic School*, mysticism once more found a wide entrance among the upper classes of society, and took hold of the ruling spirits of the time. The sentiments and poetry of this period were so obviously akin to mysticism that no one could pretend not to be aware of the relationship. In the literary effusions of the writers of Romanticism we at once recognise the direction their minds have taken. The writings of the old mystics are again consulted. Hegel studies Master Eckhart, and Schelling goes into ecstasies over Jacob Boehme, while Novalis is absorbed in Heinrich Suso. The translation of the Spanish mystics, already attempted by the Pietistic School, is resumed. Students invigorate themselves with the mysticism of the East. India's wisdom attracts Friedrich Schlegel, and he transplants



the mystical didactic poem, Bhagavadgita, into European soil. Rückert translates Persian mystics, and the theologian Tholuck writes the first German book about Sufism.

The influence of mysticism in the Romantic School is also very personal and individual. This form of it still survives in the lay piety of the Roman Catholics, the Moravian Brethren, and the Puritans. To some it is a reminiscence of their childhood, recalling old associations, to others it comes in riper years in the form of a strong and mighty friend. Sometimes the poets of that period look back with longing to the mystic charm of the Catholic church, bewailing a treasure that is lost. This is reflected in Schiller's works, although the poet himself loses none of his Kantian clearness.

He makes his Mortimer into the convert, but the enthusiasm with which the newly converted discourses upon the power and the beauty of the Roman worship, is not merely poetic fancy; Schiller must have felt the overpowering influence of it himself.

"What were my feelings, then, as I approach'd
The threshold of the churches, and within,
Heard heav'nly music floating in the air:
While from the walls and high-wrought roofs there stream'd
Crowds of celestial forms in endless train—
When the Most High, Most Glorious, pervaded

My captivated sense in real presence!
And when I saw the great and godlike visions,
The Salutation, the Nativity,
The Holy Mother, and the Trinity's
Descent, the luminous Transfiguration:
And last the holy Pontiff, clad in all
The glory of his office, bless the people!
O! What is all the pomp of gold and jewels
With which the kings of earth adorn themselves!
*He* is alone surrounded by the Godhead;
*His* mansion is in truth an heav'nly kingdom,
For not of earthly moulding are these forms!"

(*Mary Stuart*, Act 1, Scene vi. T. Mellish's Standard Translation.)

What Mortimer experienced is the same as what *Wackenroder* describes in his *Kunstliebendem Klosterbruder*, but here given in the form of a personal confession which gives a deep insight into the poet's heart:—

"The glorious temple, the surging, swaying masses of people, the splendid preparations, all this entranced me. A feeling of great solemnity came over me, and although I had no coherent thoughts I felt strangely moved as if something extraordinary was about to happen to me. Suddenly there was a great hush, and above it rose the mighty sound of music, like a gust of wind blowing over our heads. My heart beat more quickly, a longing possessed me for something great and exalted that I might embrace it. . . . And as the music thus enveloped my soul and flowed through all my veins I lifted up my eyes and gazed round . . . and the whole temple seemed to be alive, for the music had intoxicated me. Just then it stopped. A priest approached the high altar, raised the host, and showed it to the assembled people. . . . All sank on their knees, and a secret, wonderful power drew me also irresistibly down to the ground. I could not have remained standing, however much I might have wished to do so, and as I knelt, with head bent low, and my heart full to bursting, an inexplicable power again made me look up. As I gazed it appeared to me as if all those bent forms were praying to the Heavenly Father for the salvation of my soul, as if all those hundreds assembled there were sending up their supplications for the lost one in their midst, and their silent devotion irresistibly drew me towards their belief. . . . My eye fell on the altar and a picture of Christ on the cross, looking at me with inexpressible sadness; the mighty pillars of the temple, rising as it were in adoration, seemed like the apostles and saints gazing down on me, from the height of their capitals . . . while the immense dome of the Cathedral, curving over the whole assembly, was like the all-encompassing vault of heaven, bringing blessings on me and my pious resolutions."[1]



In *Stollberg* and *Zacharias Werner* the reform from

[1] *Phantasien über die Kunst*, published by L. Tieck, 2nd ed. 1814, pp. 151–153.

fancifulness back to reality was effected. The latter carried his romantic enthusiasm into the glowing ardour of a Redemptorist monk ; Stollberg, whose Pietistic notions had brought him into the Catholic Church, preserved in his poetic effusions the quiet gravity of the Pietists under the more agreeable forms of Roman Catholicism. For *Brentano*, who owed his personal conversion to Stollberg, it was not necesary to make an outward act of joining the Church of Rome, for he had been born in that belief. In *Ida Hahn-Hahn* we have an example of the romantic conversion, which many women of that age followed, or would have liked to imitate. " There is a wave of Catholicism passing over the world," says the wise historian *Geijer*, observing the phenomenon from his study at Upsala. No one, however, at that time fully realised the service which Romanticism was rendering to the Roman Church. Wherever Roman Catholicism existed it was being illumined and energised by Romanticism. The classical example of this is *Chateaubriand's " Génie du Christianisme,"* a book teeming with mysticism and mysteries, and re-establishing over all these mysterious theories the authority of the ancient Church. Even the latent Catholicism of England was roused to full activity in the practical Romanticist *Newman*. Romanticism has amply repaid the Catholic Church for all it borrowed from her.



Not only the Catholic Church, but also Protestant mysticism supplied the Romanticists with plenty of good material. The life of *Thomas Carlyle* shows how a descendant of the old Puritan School, awakened to a new life through the philosophy and poetry of Romanticism, turns again to the mysticism of his early youth and makes it the basis of his belief. And how much of Moravian mysticism there is in all German poetry ! Through *Frl. v. Klettenberg* this mystic vein touched *Goethe* in his youth, and had for a time a beneficial influence over his heart and mind. The " Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele " is the monument to his acquaintance with a sister of the Moravian Brotherhood, whose influence over Goethe cannot be too highly esteemed.

Novalis, a genuine mystic of the German School of Romanticism, generally gives the impression of being a Roman Catholic. But he also had in his youth been overshadowed by Herrnhutism, and his father was a strict Pietist. On the young poet the spirit of the Moravian Brethren had a depressing effect, and ever after he thought of them with dislike. Yet in this atmosphere germs ripened which afterwards blossomed out in his poetry.

It is well to observe, however, that love-sick notes are struck but seldom in the hymns of Novalis. As a writer of hymns he has rather

resuscitated the intimate tone of Paul Gerhard's than of Zinzendorf's mysticism.

The most powerful representative of mysticism in the age of the Romantic School was the theologian *Schleiermacher*. His boyhood had been spent in the school of the Moravian Brotherhood at Barby, and the religious impressions there received influenced his university career at Halle and his whole after life. His *Reden* (" Discourses on Religion "), written about ten years after he came to Halle, have the edifying ring of a sermon of the Moravian Brotherhood, but they contain a great deal more of it than the mere ring.

Was it a mere accident that a shoemaker's apprentice belonging to the Moravian Brotherhood one day was sent to the lady *de Krüdener's* house to measure her for a pair of boots ? Who can say what might have been the result of the " Holy Alliance " if this impulsive lady had not been struck by the inner joy illumining the face of this young shoemaker ? From that time forward, feeding on Moravian piety, she acquired that unique, impressive tone of mystical intimacy which proved irresistible to the highest in the illustrious company assembled at the Vienna Congress. Through her influence religion became a strong, co-operative factor in that political circle, and we are told that it was she who wrote the momentous words, " *The Holy Alliance,*" over the



document that for fifteen years was to govern the fate of Europe.

This was not a chance alliance of worldly and spiritual elements ; from all eternity outward pressure and inward longing go side by side. Mysticism has always flourished under the oppression of tyranny, and it has been rightly said that the despotism of the small German States and the oppression of the Napoleonic rule largely aided in leading excitable folks into tearful and quaking fits of religion, into sentimental versemaking and fantastic ways of thinking, while under freer conditions the same people might by their energetic efforts have helped to improve the world.

The sultry air of the " Alliance " period still affects the Protestantism of the fifties of last century. The inactive self-satisfaction and the languid resignation intermixed with worldly-mindedness, which characterises the religion of that decade, embittered men like *Feuerbach* and *Sören Kierkegaard* against official Christianity. *Albrecht Ritschl* also realised that the disease from which the Lutheran church suffered was mysticism and Romanticism. The speculative notions of theologians, and their dislike of cultural progress, which he zealously set himself to fight against, may be looked upon as the dregs of the mystic-romantic fermentation ; but the revival of arts and sciences and new religious energy soon brought

this gloomy period to a close. What we have to fight against in the present day is the semi-Catholicism into which—thanks to the Romantic School—Lutheranism has degenerated, namely, clerically: scholastic speculation and religious traditionalism; and in lay piety: belief in miracles and faith-healing. Romanticism has followed the regular mode of mysticism. It began by invigorating the mind, and ended by weakening it; and the weakened mind, like the weakened body, loses the power of mobility.

Looking back upon those energetic days of the Romanticists, we marvel, however, at the wide range of their ideas, the healthiness of their views, their superiority over the mystical communities from which they drew their nourishment, which were Pietism, Moravian Brotherhood, Catholicism. The Romantic School, however, aimed at other things than the sectarians, whose object was to produce a set of people made after a certain mould, or than the church, the basis of whose sovereign rule was the realm of nature. Early Romanticism was a very near relative of the Rationalistic School. We see this in Leibniz, who endeavoured to gather all things together into one unity: faith and knowledge, God and the world, spirit and nature, the religious and the mundane. To accomplish this, Rationalism gave a new interpretation to the Bible, and narrowed down Christianity; Leibniz wanted to fit religion into the frame of the ideas he had formed. The Romanticists also aimed at the restoration of this unity, but their methods were just the opposite. They enlarged their views of life in order that the infinite might be encompassed by them. They made nature into a higher, the human soul into a deeper thing—for are not both indwelt by the Divine Spirit? That there exists a something outside of our world which gives it meaning and existence, in this they all agreed. Had not Kant said long ago that behind the visible things of this world there was a something which no human understanding could grasp?



*Goethe* also bases his conception of the world on this ununderstandable something, but his poetic soul cannot rest satisfied in contemplating an altogether unfathomable reality. He tries at least poetically to conceive the basis of our existence, and sees in the phenomena of the world symbols of the real life. All nature is a message from the great unknown—

> "Nature's impenetrable agencies,
> Are they not thronging on thy heart and brain,
> Unseen yet visible to mortal ken,
> Around thee weaving their mysterious reign?

"Visible invisibility" is the mystic twilight; through the visible the invisible speaks to us. All that is transitory is but symbolic; the

this gloomy period to a close. What we have to fight against in the present day is the semi-Catholicism into which—thanks to the Romantic School—Lutheranism has degenerated, namely, clerically: scholastic speculation and religious traditionalism; and in lay piety: belief in miracles and faith-healing. Romanticism has followed the regular mode of mysticism. It began by invigorating the mind, and ended by weakening it; and the weakened mind, like the weakened body, loses the power of mobility.

Looking back upon those energetic days of the Romanticists, we marvel, however, at the wide range of their ideas, the healthiness of their views, their superiority over the mystical communities from which they drew their nourishment, which were Pietism, Moravian Brotherhood, Catholicism. The Romantic School, however, aimed at other things than the sectarians, whose object was to produce a set of people made after a certain mould, or than the church, the basis of whose sovereign rule was the realm of nature. Early Romanticism was a very near relative of the Rationalistic School. We see this in Leibniz, who endeavoured to gather all things together into one unity: faith and knowledge, God and the world, spirit and nature, the religious and the mundane. To accomplish this, Rationalism gave a new interpretation to the Bible, and narrowed down Christianity; Leibniz wanted to fit religion into the frame of the ideas he had formed. The Romanticists also aimed at the restoration of this unity, but their methods were just the opposite. They enlarged their views of life in order that the infinite might be encompassed by them. They made nature into a higher, the human soul into a deeper thing—for are not both indwelt by the Divine Spirit? That there exists a something outside of our world which gives it meaning and existence, in this they all agreed. Had not Kant said long ago that behind the visible things of this world there was a something which no human understanding could grasp?



*Goethe* also bases his conception of the world on this ununderstandable something, but his poetic soul cannot rest satisfied in contemplating an altogether unfathomable reality. He tries at least poetically to conceive the basis of our existence, and sees in the phenomena of the world symbols of the real life. All nature is a message from the great unknown—

> "Nature's impenetrable agencies,
> Are they not thronging on thy heart and brain,
> Unseen yet visible to mortal ken,
> Around thee weaving their mysterious reign?

"Visible invisibility" is the mystic twilight; through the visible the invisible speaks to us. All that is transitory is but symbolic; the

world, which time's whizzing loom unceasingly weaves, is the life-garment of the Deity. We see only the coloured reflection, not the sun itself; its light reflected in the rainbow is as much as our eyes can bear. Thus all visible things are a kind of symbolic language in which God speaks to us, and which it is our business to understand. It is our own fault if we do not understand it :—

> " Unlocked the realm of spirits lies ;—
> Thy sense is shut, thy heart is dead ! "

But when heart and sense awaken, then we can read the problem. The world truly remains a secret, but it becomes an " open secret," and as the universe reveals its signs to Faust, he sees it unfolding itself to his view as the one all-encompassing unity :—

> " How all things live and work, and, ever blending,
> Weave one vast whole from Being's ample range !
> How powers celestial, rising and descending,
> Their golden buckets ceaseless interchange !
> Their flight on rapture-breathing pinions winging,
> From heaven to earth their genial influence bringing,
> Through the wide whole their chimes melodious ringing."

The things which Goethe was satisfied to see reflected in symbols, the next generation, the Romantic School, wanted to see, to know, to feel directly. All aim at this. To *Jacobi*, faith is a direct knowing of God; and *Fichte*, writing his *Anweisung zum seligen Leben*,—a book which



from beginning to end breathes mysticism,—borrows Goethe's idea where he says that God truly exists in and for Himself, hidden behind all the symbols of the universe, and that we can only by intuition know of His existence behind this veil of earthly things which always hides Him from our eyes. But—he goes on to say —rise up to the standpoint of *religion*, and all coverings fall away. The world with its lifeless principle vanishes, and the Godhead Himself takes up His abode in thee. He comes in His original form, the form of life, the form of thine own life which thou must live. In the life and the love and the deeds of the regenerate man, God reveals Himself no longer veiled or disguised, but in His own, direct, strong vitality, and the question, " What is God ? " which a vague, shadowy conception of God could not reply to, is now answered thus : He is that which shines out of the person inspired by Him and consecrated to Him.

Tauler could speak in a similar manner, but Novalis excels even Fichte in palpable mysticism : " We touch heaven when we lay hands on a human body. Where is God to be found if not in human flesh and blood ? " Carlyle has it from Novalis.

It is always oneness, and the direct apprehension of this oneness, which the soul desires. God in the world of nature, God in ourselves; and in

*Hegel's* philosophy the transcendental climax is reached in the thought that religion is man's consciousness of the absolute spirit within him, which has found its most perfect expression in the words of Jesus : " I and the Father are one." This is the thought to which faith leads through symbols and visible things, but greater than this faith with its pictures and representations is the direct philosophical apprehension, when the thinking mind rises to the abode of absolute consciousness, high above all finite things, and thus itself becomes infinite consciousness.

To us this language sounds unfamiliar and foreign, as if it emanated from Indian or Platonic philosophers, for they indeed said very much the same thing. Yet we reap the benefit of the extravagant notions our fathers indulged in. For out of these Romantic speculations has been born the consciousness of the Infinite which now appears so natural to us. The world of human thought has become enlarged and widened by all this transcendentalism, all this soaring into the ethereal blues. Natural science has not been our only guide to these heights. And God has become enlarged for us, and our life is enlarged, because we have learned to apprehend the Infinite.

Besides all this, we owe it to the Romantic School that it has brought us in closer touch with nature. The word " nature " resounds like a



canticle throughout this school of thought. It resounds in its poetry, its science, its philosophy. All its scholars have studied nature, and have returned the richer for it. Although maybe in strange fantastic ways, yet they investigated nature ; dreamily perhaps, yet they lived nature. Nature revealed its beauty to them, until they saw it in everything. They felt the powers of nature pulsating through their innermost being, and they realised that in nature the highest power reveals itself. Or perhaps: the power of the Most High. For where the true scholar of the Romantic School elevates himself to God and is not content with the Divinity of nature, he nevertheless sees God reflected in nature, or he considers nature as a symbol of Divinity. This was Stollberg's experience when he adored " beautiful, divine nature." Thus all of this school have more or less looked upon nature.

The most precious inheritance of those days is that *craving for inward life* which it produced. While philosophers speculated themselves into gods, and poets melted into nature, and thus each in their own way accomplished the mystic union they craved for, a third way to God was found, the way of devotion and self-surrender. This way also was mystically taught, it had been trod for ages ; and when *Schleiermacher* at the beginning of the nineteenth century gave his " Discourses

on Religion," he not only spoke from personal conviction, and led on by the current of the times, but also betrayed his early bringing up among the Moravian Brethren, who had initiated him into the old mystic doctrines. These he now offered to the highly educated who despised religion, dished up with all the poetical refinement and philosophical delicacy which culture could supply.

Schleiermacher made an emotional state of mind the basis of belief. In the deepest depth of the human heart, where consciousness is not clearly defined, and where there is no real activity, but from whence proceed aspirations and dreams, pious longings and impulses, there the soul meets God, is satiated with God. Not with one simple faculty of the soul, but with our whole innermost being, do we come before God. For God himself fills the whole universe. All the forces and phenomena of the universe are expressive of Him. To grasp this with all the power of our soul, and to make this the fundamental principle of our life, that is religion.

And it is also mysticism, but this mysticism contains the elements of true religion. In this dawn of consciousness, the universe and nature and human personality stand out in their full magnitude. The personal is the chief point on which all depends, for only in so far as I am sensible of God's presence, in that measure God exists for



me. Though I believed all things, did all things, knew all things, and did not feel God's presence within me, all my religion would profit me nothing. Schleiermacher brought the glad tidings that religion is a personal matter and not a general thing which one had but to join to share its benefits, as was taught by the Catholic Church, believed by the Orthodox Protestants, and preached by the Rationalistic critical and speculative philosophers of the time. The Romantic School had discovered the worth of individualism, and Schleiermacher assigned it its proper place in religion. The vague, semi-conscious state which in his earlier writings he allots to individualism, gives place in riper years to the clear and certain assurance of individual faith. There must be not only entire conviction but entire self-surrender, the feeling of *absolute dependence*. Our absolute dependence on God is our salvation. What profit is it to know that God is absolutely good, as long as it does not affect our relation to God?

This again is one of the theories which mysticism has bequeathed to mankind, and in Schleiermacher's "absolute dependence" there are still remnants to be found of the "*amour désintéressé*" of the seventeenth century. This accounts for it being somewhat passive, and, as it may be said of Schleiermacher's early definition of re-

ligion that it has not enough clear consciousness, so one may justly protest against his "absolute dependence" theory, that—like everything that is tainted with mysticism — there is too little energetic vitality about it.

This objection was raised by many who, no less than Schleiermacher, were of opinion that religion was a personal matter; that subjectiveness is the real thing; that faith is intimacy, the passion of intimacy; that Christianity is absolute self-surrender, a leap into the depths of the unknown. By none, however, this was so eagerly and so sharply accentuated as by the Danish philosopher, *Sören Kierkegaard*. He set to work with great earnestness and skill to cut away all the wrappings in which faith had been bound up to protect it from defilement, but which were all the time eating away its vitality: speculations and æsthetics, theories and traditions, clerical, social, and individual beliefs. For there is but one faith, and it must be personal; and there is but one truth, and it must be apprehended personally.

This is the last word and essence of all mysticism, proclaimed throughout the ages with no uncertain sound; now no longer clothed in mystic coverings, but boldly preached as the simple, human truth: it is *thou* whom it concerns.

There is a little Eastern poem about a young man who in the night goes to visit his beloved, and when he knocks at her door and she asks who knocks, he answers: "It is I!"—But the door is not opened. Then he goes out into the solitude of night, and when he returns and knocks a second time, and she asks who is there, he answers: "It is thou!" Then she lets him in.



This, in a few words, is the history of mysticism. Yet not the whole of its history, for there is a sequel:—

A thousand years later a lonely wanderer knocked at the door of the Deity, and on being asked who he was, he answered, as he had been taught: "It is thou!"—But the door was not opened to him. Then he went out into the world and laboured hard and served his neighbour. And when he returned to the door of heaven, and knocked and was asked who he was, he answered: "It is I!"—and the door was opened.

For God has now revealed Himself differently. He will not that his faithful be one with Him, but that they, abiding in the fear of God, retain their individuality.

*Printed by*
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED
*Edinburgh*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

This book is due on the date indicated below, or at the expiration of a definite period after the date of borrowing, as provided by the library rules or by special arrangement with the Librarian in charge.

| DATE BORROWED | DATE DUE | DATE BORROWED | DATE DUE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | MAY 10 1951 | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| C28 (747) M100 | | | |

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
1010680578

JAN 26 1978

DEMCO